THE QUESTION

Who has authority over the Church: Christ, the elders, or the congregation?

Asked by a THF member on October 24, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 47 early Christian passages and 251 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/who-has-authority-over-the-church-christ-the-elders-or-the-congregation

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

Christ holds the highest authority over the Church. These early writers say He passed authority through the apostles to bishops, presbyters, and deacons, whom believers should obey. Yet leaders stay under Christ and His commands, must not grab power, and are chosen and approved with the whole church's consent. Authority is an ordered gift, not rival powers.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Christ rules over all things	2
2	Authority came down from Christ through the apostles	2
3	Elders really lead and should be obeyed	2
4	Church rulers stay under Christ's commands	3
5	The whole church shared in choosing leaders	4
6	Presbyters were not to seize full authority	4
7	Each person keeps the rank God gave	5
	What these passages don't tell us	5
	The Sources: 47 early Christian passages and 251 Bible verses, with links	6

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 1 OF 7

Christ rules over all things

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hippolytus says the Father has handed all things to Christ. Christ is Lord of all, so any authority in the Church starts with Him and stays under Him.

1

"And Christ rules all things, and has been appointed Almighty by the Father."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hippolytus,** *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 (c. 200–236 AD) **Source 24, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

Authority came down from Christ through the apostles

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Rome traces an orderly chain. God sent Christ, Christ sent the apostles, and the apostles tested and appointed bishops and deacons for the new churches. Church leaders do not appoint themselves; their office is passed down from Christ.

2

"Christ was therefore sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God."

later in the same passage

"Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their labors, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would later believe."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 45, page 8** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 7

Elders really lead and should be obeyed

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus tells believers to obey the presbyters who stand in the line handed down from the apostles. Tertullian describes tested elders presiding over the Christian assembly, an honor earned by character, not bought.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

3 “Therefore, it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 16, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

4 “Proven men of our elders preside over us. They gain that honor not by purchase, but by established character.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Apology* 39 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 22, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Church rulers stay under Christ's commands

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen says good church leaders are under the influence of Christ the King and rule by God's commands, not worldly policy. He adds that the Church rejects men who are hungry to rule. A leader's authority is a service under Christ, not his own.

5 “And if those who govern in the Church, and are called rulers of the divine nation—that is, the Church—rule well, they rule according to the divine commands, and never allow themselves to be led astray by worldly policy.”

later in the same passage

“We reject those who are ambitious to rule. But we urge those to take a public charge in the Church of God who, because of too much modesty, are not easily persuaded to do so.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 75 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 26, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

POINT 5 OF 7

The whole church shared in choosing leaders

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Rome says ministers were appointed with the consent of the whole Church, and faithful ones should not be pushed out. The Apostolic Constitutions describe a bishop chosen by all the people, who are asked if he is the man they want.

6 “We believe, therefore, that those appointed by them, or later by other distinguished men with the consent of the whole Church, who have served the flock of Christ blamelessly in a humble, peaceful, and selfless spirit, and have long enjoyed a good reputation with everyone, cannot be justly removed from the ministry.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 44, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

7 “He must be an excellent man, chosen by all the people.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 38, page 8** Read it in the library ›
(c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Presbyters were not to seize full authority

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian rebukes presbyters who ignored the bishop over them and claimed all authority for themselves. Ignatius says the faithful obey the bishop and presbyters. In this order, elders hold real authority but within a structure, not above it.

8 “For what danger should we not fear from the Lord's displeasure, when some of the presbyters remember neither the Gospel nor their own position, and also consider neither the Lord's future judgment nor the bishop now placed over them, but claim full authority for themselves?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* **Source 28, page 8** Read it in the library ›
(c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

9 “He who is within the altar is pure; therefore, he is obedient to the bishop and presbyters.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 5, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Each person keeps the rank God gave

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

The Apostolic Constitutions warn everyone, clergy and people alike, to stay within the place given to them, because the ranks belong to God. Cyprian says the Church is made up of the bishop, the clergy, and all who stand firm in the faith.

10 “Now this is what we all together charge you: let each one remain in the rank appointed to him, and do not go beyond his proper bounds. For these are not ours, but God's.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 37, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 “Since this is founded on divine law, I am amazed that some, with reckless boldness, have chosen to write to me as if they were writing in the name of the Church, when the Church is established in the bishop and the clergy, and in all who stand firm in the faith.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 30, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not lay out a step-by-step way to correct or remove an unworthy elder.
- They describe bishops, presbyters, and deacons working together, so they do not settle how a congregation run by elders alone should work.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 47 early Christian passages and 251 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–47, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 48–143, in Bible order), then 155 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *47 passages from 15 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 4 (1885 English; on point 3) that speaks to you the word of God remember night and day; and you shall honour him as the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

Barnabas, *c. 70–132 AD · source 2*

2 *Epistle of Barnabas* (1885 English; on point 2) "these He gave authority to preach the Gospel, being twelve in number, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 3*

3 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 1) is the Lord of the people, having received all authority from His Father… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 4–9*

4 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 6) "deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 5** "what is the bishop but one who beyond all others possesses all power and authority, so far as it is possible for a man to possess it, who according to… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Epistle to the Magnesians* (1885 English; on point 6) "it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, having respect to the power of God the… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English; on point 6) "do ye reverence them as Christ Jesus, of whose place they are the keepers, even as the bishop is the representative of the Father of all things, and the presbyters… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 3) "presbyters, "feed the flock which is among you," till God shall show who is to hold the rule over you… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistles of Ignatius* (on point 6) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 10*

10 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English; on point 4) "let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 11–12*

11 *Diatessaron* 47 (on point 1) Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you. For you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he might give eternal life… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Diatessaron* 55 (1885 English; on point 1) “Arabic, p. 209] Matthew 28:18b Then said Jesus unto them, I have been given all authority in heaven 5 and earth… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 13–16*

13 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 3) with him, but also to those who listened to him, as he himself demonstrates. When the bishops and presbyters came from Ephesus and the nearby cities and gathered in Miletus… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English; on point 3) “Such presbyters does the Church nourish, of whom also the prophet says: “I will give thy rulers in peace, and thy bishops in righteousness.” Of whom also did the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) “it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** “Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church,—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 17–21*

17 *Stromata* 3 themselves in ruling their own house, so that they may also be able to preside over the whole Church. So then, each person, in whatever calling he was called, as… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Stromata* 4.17 (1885 English; on point 3) “us therefore respect those who are over us, and reverence the elders… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Instructor* 2.8 (on point 1) “the crown of the whole church is Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Stromata* 6.13 (1885 English; on point 4) an one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister (deacon) of the will of God, if he do and teach what is the Lord's… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Stromata* 7.1 (1885 English; on point 3) “also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 22–23*

22 *Apology* 39 (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honour not by purchase, but by established character… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7 (1885 English; on point 7) “is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the… [continues online] **read ›**

Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · sources 24–25*

24 *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 **Quote 1, page 2** “delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign, till He has put… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 (on point 3) He claimed that he himself was Moses, and that Aaron was his brother. When the blessed presbyters heard this, they called him before the Church and questioned him. But at… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 26–27*

26 *Against Celsus* 75 **Quote 5, page 3** “if those who govern in the Church, and are called rulers of the divine nation—that is, the… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Commentary on Matthew* 12 the Holy Spirit," John 20:22, and so on. Many, then, will say to the Savior, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But not all who… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 28–35*

28 *Epistles* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “what danger ought we not to fear from the Lord's displeasure, when some of the presbyters, remembering neither the Gospel nor their own place, and, moreover, considering neither the… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Epistles* to you to be a bishop who, after a bishop had been appointed in the Church by sixteen fellow bishops, strives through bribery to be made a corrupt and outsider… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Epistles* **Quote 11, page 5** commands and warnings we ought to keep, describes the honor of a bishop and the order of His Church in the Gospel. He says to Peter: “I say to you… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Epistles* (on point 3) “all other heretics, if they have separated themselves from the Church of God, can have nothing of power… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 2) “first of all the Lord gave that power to Peter, upon whom He built the Church, and whence He appointed and showed the source of unity — the power, namely, that… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 2) “the power of remitting sins was given to the apostles, and to the churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the bishops who succeeded to them by vicarious… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Epistles* to us at all what the enemies of the Church do, as long as we ourselves keep respect for our authority and for the firmness of reason and truth. For… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Epistles* (on point 6) especially so since you already know well enough the name of Fortunatus, who is one of the five presbyters who some time ago deserted the Church and were recently excommunicated… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 36–42*

36 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 7) “the bishops and the presbyters are the priests… [continues online] **read ›**

37 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 10, page 5** yourselves are not ignorant of them. For you certainly know that those named by us bishops, and presbyters, and deacons, were made so by prayer and by the laying on… [continues online] **read ›**

38 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 7, page 4** chosen vessel, our fellow apostle, is present with us, and James the bishop, and the rest of the presbyters, and the seven deacons. First, therefore, I Peter say that a… [continues online] **read ›**

39 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 3) “let them not drink wine, lest by drinking they forget wisdom and are… [continues online] **read ›**

40 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) “We command that the bishop have power over the goods of the Church… [continues online] **read ›**

41 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 6) “Upon this account, therefore, O bishop, endeavour to be pure in your actions, and to adorn your place and dignity, which is that of one sustaining the character of God… [continues online] **read ›**

42 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 6) He lays on hands, ordains, offers, and receives the blessing from bishops, but never from presbyters. A bishop removes from office any clergyman who deserves removal, except a bishop, because… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 43*

43 *Disputation with Manes* 1 (on point 2) is, the foundation of the Church, and has put us in trust of the law, appointing ministers and presbyters and bishops in it. He also describes, in the places assigned… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 44–47*

44 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** “are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of… [continues online] **read ›**

45 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

46 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 3) us esteem those who have the rule over us… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

47 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 3) “ye did all things without respect of persons, and walked in the commandments of God, being obedient to those who had the rule over you, and giving all fitting honour… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *96 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

48 **Exodus 24:14** And they said to the elders, “Stay quietly here until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; if anyone has a case to be judged, let him go to them.” **read ›**

49 **Leviticus 4:15** The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the calf before the Lord, and they shall slaughter the calf before the Lord. **read ›**

50 **Leviticus 19:32** You shall rise up before the gray-haired and honor the face of the elder, and you shall fear your God. I am the Lord your God. **read ›**

51 **Numbers 11:16** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you yourself know to be elders of the people and their scribes; and bring them to the tabernacle of witness, and they shall stand there with you. **read ›**

52 **Numbers 11:24** So Moses went out and spoke the words of the Lord to the people; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and set them all around the tabernacle. **read ›**

53 **Numbers 27:16** “Let the Lord God of the spirits and of all flesh select a man over this congregation, **read ›**

54 **Numbers 27:17** who shall go out before them and who shall come in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.” **read ›**

55 **Deuteronomy 1:15** So I took from you wise, knowledgeable, and understanding men, and I appointed them as leaders over you: commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers for your judges. **read ›**

56 **2 Chronicles 34:13** And they were over the burden-bearers and over all who did the work in every kind of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, judges, and gatekeepers. **read ›**

57 **Ezra 6:4** with three strong courses of stone and one course of timber; and the expense shall be given from the king’s house. **read ›**

58 **Ezra 6:11** And a decree has been issued by me that if any man alters this word, a beam shall be pulled down from his house, and he shall be lifted up and struck on it; and his house shall be forfeited to me. **read ›**

59 **Ezra 7:2** the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, **read ›**

60 **Ezra 9:4** Then everyone who followed the word of the God of Israel gathered to me because of the faithlessness of the exiles; and I sat still in silence until the evening sacrifice. **read ›**

61 **Nehemiah 5:9** And I said, “The thing that you are doing is not good. You will not walk this way in the fear of our God, because of the taunts of the Gentiles our enemies. (Septuagint 2 Esdras 15:9 (Nehemiah 5:9 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

62 **Proverbs 10:6** The blessing of the Lord is upon the head of the righteous, but untimely grief will cover the mouth of the ungodly. **read ›**

63 **Proverbs 10:8** The wise in heart will receive commandments, but he who is unguarded and crooked in his lips will be tripped up. **read ›**

64 **Proverbs 10:32** The lips of righteous men drip graces, but the mouth of the ungodly is turned away. **read ›**

65 **Proverbs 14:17** A hot-tempered man acts without counsel, but a man of sound judgment bears many things. **read ›**

66 **Ecclesiastes 3:15** What has been already is, and what is to be has already been; and God will seek the one who is pursued. **read ›**

67 **Song of Solomon 7:12** Let us rise early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine has flowered, whether the blossom has opened, whether the pomegranates have flowered. There I will give you my breasts. (Septuagint Song of Solomon 7:13 (Song of Solomon 7:12 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

68 **Isaiah 4:5** And he shall come, and it shall be that a cloud shall overshadow by day every place of Mount Zion and all that is around it, and as of smoke and of the light of fire burning by night; and with all the glory it shall be sheltered. **read ›**

69 **Isaiah 15:3** Wrap yourselves in sackcloth in her squares, and lament on her rooftops and in her lanes; all of you, wail with weeping. **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

70 **Ezekiel 26:3** therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, as the sea comes up with its waves. **read ›**

71 **Ezekiel 31:2** Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: To whom have you compared yourself in your height? **read ›**

72 **Amos 6:3** You who are coming to the evil day, who draw near and lay hold of false Sabbaths, **read ›**

73 **Amos 9:2** If they hide themselves in Hades, from there my hand shall drag them up; and if they go up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. **read ›**

74 **Habakkuk 1:2** How long, O Lord, shall I cry out, and you will not hear at all? Shall I cry out to you when I am wronged, and you will not save? **read ›**

75 **1 Esdras 5:40** And Nehemiah and Attharias told them not to share in the holy things until a high priest should arise clothed with the Manifestation and the Truth. **read ›**

76 **1 Esdras 6:4** and said to them, “By whose command are you building this house and finishing this roof and all the other things? And who are the builders who are finishing these things?” **read ›**

77 **1 Esdras 6:11** Then we asked these elders, saying, ‘By whose command are you building this house and laying the foundations of these works?’ **read ›**

78 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

79 **1 Esdras 9:4** and that whoever did not come within two or three days, according to the judgment of the ruling elders, should have his cattle given over to the temple, and he himself should be cut off from the multitude of the captivity. **read ›**

80 **Wisdom of Solomon 6:3** For your dominion was given you by the Lord, and your sovereignty by the Most High, who will examine your works and search out your plans. **read ›**

81 **Wisdom of Solomon 9:2** and by your wisdom formed man, to have dominion over the creatures made by you, **read ›**

82 **Wisdom of Solomon 10:2** and gave him strength to rule over all things. **read ›**

83 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:2** For the Lord has glorified the father over the children, and has established the judgment of the mother over the sons. **read ›**

84 **Wisdom of Sirach 7:14** Do not babble in a multitude of elders, and do not repeat a word in your prayer. **read ›**

85 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:9** Do not miss the talk of the elders, for they themselves learned from their fathers; because from them you will learn understanding, and how to give an answer in time of need. **read ›**

86 **Wisdom of Sirach 10:20** Among brothers their leader is honored, and those who fear the Lord in his eyes. **read ›**

87 **Wisdom of Sirach 17:2** He gave them days by number and a fixed time, and gave them authority over the things on it. **read ›**

88 **Wisdom of Sirach 44:4** leaders of the people by their counsels, and by understanding of the people’s learning; wise words were in their instruction; **read ›**

89 **Wisdom of Sirach 45:17** In his commandments he gave him authority in covenants of judgments, to teach Jacob the testimonies and to enlighten Israel in his law. **read ›**

90 **Susanna 1:34** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

91 **Susanna 1:50** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

92 **1 Maccabees 10:6** And he gave him authority to gather forces and to make weapons and to be his ally; and he said that the hostages in the citadel should be handed over to him. **read ›**

93 **1 Maccabees 10:8** And they feared with a great fear when they heard that the king had given him authority to gather forces. **read ›**

94 **1 Maccabees 10:32** I also give up my authority over the citadel in Jerusalem and give it to the high priest, so that he may station in it men of his own choosing to guard it. **read ›**

95 **1 Maccabees 10:35** And no one shall have authority to exact anything from any of them or to trouble them about any matter. **read ›**

96 **1 Maccabees 14:17** But when they heard that Simon his brother had become high priest in his place and was ruling over the country and the cities in it, **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

97 **1 Maccabees 14:35** The people saw Simon’s deeds and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things, and for the righteousness and the faithfulness he had kept toward his nation, and because he sought in every way to exalt his people. **read ›**

98 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

99 **1 Maccabees 14:41** and that the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a faithful prophet should arise; **read ›**

100 **1 Maccabees 14:42** and that he should be general over them, and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, to appoint men over its works and over the country and over the weapons and over the strongholds; **read ›**

101 **1 Maccabees 14:43** and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, and that he should be obeyed by all, and that all contracts in the country should be written in his name, and that he should be clothed in purple and wear gold. **read ›**

102 **2 Maccabees 3:15** The priests, throwing themselves down before the altar in their priestly robes, called toward heaven upon him who had given the law about deposits, that he would keep them safe for those who had deposited them. **read ›**

103 **2 Maccabees 3:34** And you, having been flogged by him, report the mighty power of God to all.” And when they had said this, they vanished. **read ›**

104 **2 Maccabees 14:13** giving orders to kill Judas himself, to scatter those with him, and to install Alcimus as high priest of the greatest temple. **read ›**

105 **3 Maccabees 7:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

106 **4 Maccabees 4:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

107 **4 Maccabees 4:18** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

108 **1 Enoch 82:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

109 **1 Enoch 89:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

110 **Matthew 7:29** for he taught them with authority, and not like the scribes. **read ›**

111 **Matthew 9:8** But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such authority to men. **read ›**

112 **Matthew 16:18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I shall build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **read ›**

113 **Matthew 16:19** And I shall give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” **read ›**

114 **Matthew 21:23** When he had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority?” **read ›**

115 **Matthew 28:18** Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. **read ›**

116 **Mark 3:15** and to have authority to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: **read ›**

117 **Mark 10:42** Jesus summoned them and said to them, “You know that they who are recognized as rulers over the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **read ›**

118 **Luke 1:5** In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **read ›**

119 **Luke 6:13** When it was day, he called his disciples, and from them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles: **read ›**

120 **Luke 20:2** They said to him, “Tell us, by what authority do you do these things, or who gave you this authority?” **read ›**

121 **John 1:6** There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. **read ›**

122 **John 17:2** even as you gave him authority over all flesh, so he will give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **read ›**

123 **Acts 3:2** A man lame from his mother’s womb was being carried. They laid him daily at the temple gate called Beautiful to ask alms from those entering the temple. **read ›**

124 **Acts 3:14** But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, **read ›**

125 **Acts 9:14** Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

126 **Acts 14:23** They appointed elders for them in every church and, after prayer with fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **read ›**

127 **Acts 20:17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. **read ›**

128 **Romans 13:1** Let every soul be in subjection to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those who exist are ordained by God. **read ›**

129 **1 Corinthians 7:4** The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. **read ›**

130 **1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. **read ›**

131 **Ephesians 1:22** And he subjected all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things for the church, **read ›**

132 **1 Thessalonians 5:12** Now we ask you, brothers, to recognize those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, **read ›**

133 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

134 **1 Timothy 3:2** The bishop therefore must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable, able to teach; **read ›**

135 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **read ›**

136 **1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. **read ›**

137 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**

138 **Titus 1:7** For a bishop must be blameless as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, **read ›**

139 **Titus 2:15** Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. **read ›**

140 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls, as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you. **read ›**

141 **1 Peter 5:1** I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed: **read ›**

142 **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily; not for dishonest gain, but willingly; **read ›**

143 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *155 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 4:25

Exodus 23:14 · 32:32

Leviticus 15:18 · 19:15

Numbers 19:2

Deuteronomy 8:18 · 20:5 · 20:19

Psalms 51:7

Proverbs 9:17 · 17:6 · 22:6 · 30:19 · 31:20

Isaiah 1:15 · 1:17 · 1:18 · 50:9 · 53:11 · 60:17 · 63:3 · 66:2

Jeremiah 23:24

Matthew 4:10 · 5:6 · 5:9 · 5:17 · 6:12 · 6:19 · 6:24 · 7:21 · 7:24 · 9:13 · 10:5 · 10:19 · 11:5 · 13:27 · 18:18 · 18:20 · 19:6 · 22:39 · 23:9 · 24:5 · 24:11

Mark 7:9 · 8:38 · 12:39 · 16:17

Luke 6:46 · 10:16 · 10:20 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 16:15 · 20:25 · 20:27 · 20:34 · 20:46 · 21:14

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

John 1:14 · 3:6 · 6:27 · 7:37 · 12:32 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 17:6 · 17:11 · 20:22 · 21:17

Acts 1:8 · 4:32 · 9:5 · 20:29

Romans 1:17 · 2:13 · 7:4 · 7:12 · 11:4 · 12:17 · 13:14 · 14:10 · 14:12 · 14:19 · 14:21 · 15:27

1 Corinthians 1:30 · 6:10 · 6:12 · 6:18 · 7:5 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 7:14 · 7:32 · 7:39 · 9:25 · 10:4 · 10:33 · 12:3 · 12:8 · 14:21 · 14:33

2 Corinthians 3:18 · 5:10 · 8:21 · 11:3

Galatians 1:10 · 3:11 · 3:27 · 5:13 · 5:17

Ephesians 4:2 · 4:5 · 4:27 · 5:18 · 6:5 · 6:9

Philippians 1:18 · 2:6 · 2:7 · 4:3

Colossians 1:15 · 2:20 · 3:22 · 3:25 · 4:1

2 Thessalonians 3:6

1 Timothy 2:4 · 4:1 · 4:3 · 5:14 · 5:21

2 Timothy 3:8 · 4:6

Titus 1:5 · 1:6

Hebrews 1:3 · 9:13 · 10:38 · 13:5 · 13:7

James 2:13 · 5:14 · 5:16

1 Peter 1:17 · 1:19

1 John 2:27

Revelation 1:6 · 2:5 · 4:4 · 11:16 · 22:18

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Who has authority over the Church: Christ, the elders, or the congregation?” on October 24, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Who has authority over the Church: Christ, the elders, or the congregation?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/who-has-authority-over-the-church-christ-the-elders-or-the-congregation. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 24.”

© 2026 The Historic Faith. Selection, arrangement and editing by THF; machine-compiled text and public-domain quotations are not claimed. For personal study; please don’t republish.

THEHISTORICFAITH.COM

THE END OF THIS STUDY