

CPC Adult Sunday Studies, Fall 2025  
 Total Christ: The Full Vision for His Church  
 5 | Communal

## COMMUNAL: CHRIST OUR KING

**Last Week:** Anchored in the gospel-centered (covenant) and missional (temple) vision of the church, last week we considered Christ as our priest (sacramental), who is ascended in heaven, and to whom we are united. In addition to being our prophet (confessional), we consider now how Jesus reigns in our midst as our king.

### **Key Text: 1Peter 5.1-5**

*"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

- Notice all that this passage assumes: that there are elders with authority; that there is a designated "flock" or people the elders are to oversee, in their "charge"; that the gospel applies equally to both
- See also 1Tim. 3.1-13, 4.6-16 ("council of elders"= Gk. "presbytery"); Titus 1.5-9; Acts 15.1-35, 20.17-38; Heb. 13.7, 17 ("Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."); Matt. 16.13-19, 18.15-20; John 20.19-23

WLC 45 - **"Christ executeth the office of a king**, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their

good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.”

- WCF 25.2 - “The **visible church**, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, **out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.**”
- 25.3 - "Unto this catholic visible church **Christ hath given** the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them **effectual** thereunto.”
- 25.4 - "This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are **more or less pure**, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.”
- 30.1-2: "I. The Lord Jesus, as king and head of His Church, has therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. II. To these officers the **keys of the kingdom of heaven** are committed; by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to **shut that kingdom** against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to **open it** unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”

### **Christ our King through Gospel-Centered Government**

- *Ephesians 4:1-16* - In this beautiful charter for the church, Paul describes both the unity (vv.1-6) and diversity (vv.7-12) of members that come together as they are built up into the Head, Christ. It is a function of God’s grace in our life that we are bound to one another in the church.
- *1 Corinthians 12:12-31* - Notice what this passage implies about who we are - we are people who can only experience Christ fully in community. “Me and Jesus” spirituality is, by definition, impossible because you would miss out on most of Jesus! [see also *Romans 12:1-21*]

**Experiencing Christ our King in a Gospel-centered way includes:** Gracious government and shepherding; overcoming sin; life-on-life discipleship. Even

“excommunication” is done with the view toward repentance - “so that his spirit may be saved” (1Cor. 5.5).

### **Christ our King through Missional Government**

- *Titus 1.5-9* - local elders are how Paul determines whether a region has been reached!
- *1Tim. 5* - applied to mercy to widows. If the church is the missional presence of Christ, then “no poor among them” gets applied to its members as a sign of God’s redemptive presence.
- *Acts 2* - Christ becomes “local” through each native language and the Church begins spreading as a multiplying community

**Experiencing Christ our King in a missional way includes:** Mercy ministry and holistic empowerment as well as an ecclesial evangelist. Christ reigns over all of life, so is meant to provide redemption and mercy to spiritual and material needs.

- Being “missional” also includes **being local**, so that the Spirit forms the body of Christ in the language and people of the local culture. This includes all sorts of ways we are to be enmeshed in our culture. It also includes electing local “ruling elders” - “look for able men from all the people” (Exodus 18.21). If teaching elders are the priestly aspect of God to humanity, ruling elders are meant to be among the people representing humans to God. We can call a pastor to start a new church, but it’s not a full church until local elders have been installed.

### **Christ our King through Institutional Government**

*1Cor. 5.1-13; Matt. 18.15-20; Acts 15*

1. **“Institution”** - not a voluntary community like the YMCA or Planet Fitness
  1. Public profession is not one of choice, but of obligation and command from God - very entrance into life is through a public testimony
  2. **“A solitary Christian is seen to be a contradiction in terms.** The society of Christians is . . . not an accidental or voluntary union which has grown up of itself: it is a union designed beforehand, appointed from the

beginning by God, and plainly contemplated and required in every page of the NT. There are **precepts** in the Bible addressed, not to believers separately, but to believers associated together into a corporate society; there are **duties** that are enjoined upon the body, and not upon the members of which it is composed; there are **powers** assigned to the community, to which the individuals of the community are strangers; there is a **government**, an order, a code of laws, a system of ordinances and officers described in Scripture, which can apply to none other than a collective association of Christians. Without the existence of a Church, or of a body of believers, as contradistinguished from believers individually, very much of what is contained in the Bible **would be unintelligible, and without practical application.**" - James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*

## 2. Nature of the Church's authority:

1. **Problems to avoid:** 1. *Overrate* - extending it beyond the bounds of Scripture (generally, Catholics, but we're all tempted to do this!); 2. *Underrate* - church power becomes merely human appointment and advice, not authority (generally, Baptists and non-denom.)
  1. *From and by Christ* - "it is not the Church that governs and dispenses ordinances and spiritual graces in His name, and by reason of His original gift and endowment to her, but Christ who, **personally present**, governs and administers ordinances and blessing through the Church. The Church has no store of life apart from Christ being in it" (199).

## 2. *Extent - how far?*

1. we're called to submit to Church power insofar as it is in agreement with the Word of God AND, in a subordinate sense, because it is emitted by the Church, which is itself instituted by God in His Word - lest there be no power that is binding *except for what the members otherwise consent to*. **Authority, by definition, cannot be limited by consent.**
2. Church power is more and better than just a human power that is in agreement with the Word, which is **advice, not authority.**
3. If the Church is more than just a voluntary, humanly-appointed institution, than it must possess power outside of human consent;

otherwise, there would be “laws without authority, ordinances without grace, and discipline without judgment” (239). Compare the judgment of a civil law court, which is pronounced and carried out regardless of the consent of those it applies to.

4. *More than mere consent or majority* - If power is only so far as consent goes, then the majority, in effect, becomes the office-bearers, since the minority must obey the will of the majority.

1. This is very hard for people who grow up in a democracy to appreciate! We must be willing to hear the unpopular truth that the **majority** is not automatically the voice of God. This also saves all the people from being duped by a charismatic figure who can convince the majority of many things that are false.

5. The danger of “personal collisions” looms large in church conflicts, whereas in a Presbyterian case, the personal aspects can be extracted when a case is brought to a higher court (244).
6. The “bishops”, “presbyters”, “rulers” and “pastors” are throughout Scripture NOT bound by the consent of the community, they are bound by the Word of God.

### 3. *Limits - but no further!*

1. **Spiritual** - excluding temporal or civil authority, like legal punishments or fines

#### 2. **By Christ, the Head:**

1. The laws are **declaratory**, NOT enacting - meaning they merely explain, apply and declare the laws that Christ has already revealed. The Word of God alone has powers of legislation, enacting laws.
2. The powers are **ministerial and subordinate** - office-bearers are merely servants with authority derived from Christ, carrying out the will of Christ, not their own. They may pronounce judgments based on the precedents in the Word of God, rather than starting their own precedents. [from Ch. 2, pp. 218-221]

3. **By the Word of God** - forbidding any addition or subtraction
4. By the rights, privileges, and liberty of the Christian people - **freedom** of conscience