

# MBC MEN'S STUDY

## LEADERSHIP 9: THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

### CLASS 4: 1 TIMOTHY 3

- August 11<sup>th</sup>: Introduction and 1 Timothy 1
- September 22<sup>nd</sup>: 1 Timothy 2
- October 20<sup>th</sup>: 1 Timothy 4
- **November 10<sup>th</sup>: 1 Timothy 3**
- December 8<sup>th</sup>: 1 Timothy 5-6

### INTRODUCTION

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After Paul finishes with instructing Timothy on how to conduct the worship service of the church, he moves on to how the church leadership is structured in **verses 1-13**.

He discusses the qualifications of overseers in verses 1-7, the qualifications of deacons in verses 8-13 and then ends the section with an exhortation and a confession of the church.

As pastors and leaders in the church, we would do well to pay close attention to the instruction which Paul gives Timothy here. Far too many churches' leadership structures are based upon secular views and values. Some base it on the corporate world, looking to successful businesses to define and decide who should be in charge. They look at how much money a person makes or what stuff they own. Upon seeing they are successful in the world's eyes; they desire that person in leadership. **They equate worldly success with God's blessings.**

Other churches seek to cave to the pressures of our modern day with regards to leadership. Just as Paul gave very specific instructions regarding women in the previous chapter, he does so again with regards to church leadership. ***Men, not a mixture of men and women, are to lead the church of God.*** This does not mean that women are lesser in value or worth, but that to fulfill their God-ordained role, women, just as men, must follow what the Bible dictates regarding their positions. If we desire to be blessed by God in ministry, we must do ministry God's way.

Looking at the qualification that Paul lays out, Köstenberger says, "Qualifications for church leaders don't present an ideal of perfection but set a standard of spiritual and moral maturity. I've heard Don Carson make the

point more than once that what is most remarkable about the qualifications for church leadership enunciated by Paul is that they are so unremarkable.”<sup>1</sup>

While church leaders certainly set the example for the sheep, they are not expected to be perfect. They are fallen men who are leading fallen men as they all become more and more like Christ.

One of the dangers of church leadership is thinking that you have somehow arrived as a leader. There is a temptation to put oneself over and above the flock that God has bought. This is why, while certainly remarkable, these qualifications are essential for the pastor or church leader to have continually on their mind.

### 1) **Verses 1-7: Qualifications for Overseers**

- Church members will most likely never rise above the level their leadership. The quality and effectiveness of our church will be linked directly to the character of its leadership.
- Paul had ministered in Ephesus for several years, he trained Timothy, their pastor and knew that false teachers were infiltrating their ranks. He had to make sure those who were going to be placed in charge were not going to cave under pressure.
- As we briefly look at what it means to be called to ministry, let’s see what Paul says in **verse 1**
  - A man must aspire (to long for...to strive to attain) this work, first and foremost.
  - The office which he desires is a noble task or a *good work*.
    - This is a glorious calling which the Lord has blessed us with.
    - We are put in a place which we are shepherding men and women whom Christ died for and called to Himself.

### 2) **Verse 2** gives the most important requirement for God’s overseer...*he must be above reproach*.

- This is a non-negotiable with those who seek to shepherd the flock of God.
  - Being above reproach means *being above criticism or not open to blame*.
  - You must have nothing that others can accuse you of...not that you are without sin but there is no sin which has defiled your character, and you are unable to set the standard for the church.
  - You will be preaching on a weekly basis the importance of holiness, repentance, following the Lord, etc. so you must be able to also do the same.
    - Our theology must match with our practice, or our people will not trust us.
- Continuing in **verse 2**, Paul gives some insight into what a man who is above reproach looks like.

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<sup>1</sup> Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman*, 224.

- ***Husband of one wife.***
  - This can also be translated ***a one-woman man.***
  - This is not speaking about being married, but rather to issues of character. Paul is saying the man's moral and sexual behavior must not be corrupt.
    - The woman that he is with must be the woman that he loves, desires, thinks about and cares for with all his heart.
  - This area has been one that has put far too many men out of the ministry. When men leading the church allow fame, fortune or power to get to them, they fall when women come complimenting them.
    - You men need to guard against this in as many practical ways as possible. Chiefly among them is to know that you too can fall into this malicious sin.
    - The moment that you think you will never sin against your wife is the exact moment that your guard is down, and you have just taken a step closer to sinning against her.
    - The enemy desires nothing more than to see each of you fall into this sin, taking those whom God has entrusted to your care with you.
- ***Sober-minded.***
  - This means you are not to be under the influence of any alcohol at any time. Though this does not prohibit one from drinking alcohol, church leaders and pastors need to make sure that we are not setting a negative example for our people.
  - **Proverbs 20:1 “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”**
    - You rarely, if ever, hear of good things coming from times that men were drinking together. The effects of alcohol take over and people lose their self-control and end up giving in to the flesh.
    - We must do our diligence to refrain from excessive living.
  - The men and women that God has you shepherding need you to be at your best. They will also need you at times when you may not be ready. Therefore, do all you can to be as ready as you can when they need you.
- ***Self-controlled.***
  - A well-disciplined man is a self-controlled man. You need to make sure you order your priorities in a well thought out way.
  - Having self-control means that you are serious about the things of the Lord. You take things like holiness and sanctification seriously. You desire to grow in grace and godliness.

- The things in your life are centered around the Lord and His Word.
- You are not led by your emotions or thoughts. Though not cold and emotionless, you think through things, not jumping to conclusions or on the cultural bandwagons.
- You desire to know the truth, even when it's difficult.
- **Respectable**
  - This carries with it the idea of an organized life. This man will be one that lives in moderation and is well-ordered.
  - He is not confused about things but sets his life and the church on the right path.
  - He is not overbearing, people can come to him for their issues.
- **Hospitable**
  - Made up of two Greek words “love” and “stranger”, this word really captures the heart of Christianity. In Paul's day, this meant taking in the traveling Christian to stay in your home and eat your food.
    - Hotels were not a nice place to be nor were they readily available. Inviting someone, a stranger, into your home was a tangible way to show Christ's love.
    - Alexander Strauch says, “**Hardly anything is more characteristic of Christian love than hospitality.** Through the ministry of hospitality we share the things we value most: family, home, financial resources, food, privacy, and time. In other words, we share our lives.”
  - Opening your home and life to strangers is not only for displaying your love for Christ but it also enables it. Hospitality creates an environment and opportunities for deepening relationships, discipleship and even for evangelism.
  - This will also practically do two things for you as a pastor:
    - You will smell like the sheep.
      - It makes sure the sheep know that you are not better than them. You cannot lead a church while locked in your office. You need to be with them because *you too are a sheep!*
    - The sheep will know you.
      - When accusations come against you from the sheep, others will know your character and love and not put stock into what was said.

- ***Able to teach***
  - Though this is not a moral characteristic trait as the rest, as a teacher, you must be able to live what you preach. If you are preaching holiness and right living from the Bible, then your life had better match up to it.
  - *Being able to teach is not a natural ability, but a spiritual gift.*
  - All elders should, at some level, be able to rightly handle and teach the Word of God.
    - This does not mean that all elders will teach from the pulpit on Sunday mornings, but they ought to have teaching outlets.
  - This has nothing to do with personality or the cleverness of the teacher. This is a gift that God gives to men whom He desires to lead and shepherd His people.
  - The teacher then responds by studying doctrine and learning how to properly teach the Word.
  - Though this is a spiritual gift, it is one that must be practiced and refined.
- ***Not addicted to wine***
  - This is not talking about getting drunk, that would already disqualify the man. This is talking about someone who is known for drinking on a normal basis. In other words, someone who has a reputation around the area for having regular drinks.
  - Not only is this man a danger to himself, but also to others. By setting the example that frequent drinking is okay, those whom he has been charged with shepherding will follow that poor example. He must not only account for his own sin, but for causing many to stumble who watch him.
- ***Not violent***
  - This is pretty simple; you cannot react to stressful or emotional situations with violence.
  - You cannot be known for hitting or striking people in any way.
  - You must be known for reacting with calmness and thinking through your response.
  - Your default setting cannot be something that is violent.
- ***Gentle***
  - This is one who is gracious, not remembering the wrongs of others.
  - Someone who seeks to be considerate and thinking of others first.
  - When criticism comes to you or your ministry, you must not react in retaliation but be gentle towards those who come against you.
  - This is mark of not only elders, but a mature Christian who trusts the Lord.

- **Not quarrelsome**
  - This literally means *not contentious* or *not looking for a fight*.
  - **This has more to do with how you relate to others than actually physically fighting.**
  - You cannot be someone who causes disharmony or disunity in the leadership of the church. To be quarrelsome means you are just looking out for your own way and when it does not happen, you stop the process and fight for your way to be done.
  - This is important on your elder boards or elder leadership in the church. If you have someone on your team that simply wants their own way or is always looking for a fight, you will never be able to properly lead the church.
- **Not a lover of money**
  - Paul amplifies this point when he says in **1 Timothy 6:10** “**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**”
  - If we love money and have that as our motivation, we will no longer care about the people. The pastor must neither be greedy nor too stingy.
    - If money is the end, then we will do whatever it takes to get it. Instead of our churches being about God and His glory, it will be about getting more money.
    - Pastors are to use their money as good stewards for the glory of God.

3) Paul now goes to the family life of the pastor in **verses 4-5**.

- He must be a man how is able to manage his house well, especially his children.
- **There is no better training ground for a pattern of Godly behavior than the minister’s home.**
- This may be a point of contention or disagreement among some of you.
- Does this mean that an elder or pastor must be married?
  - **I think the normal process is that he is married.** I believe that if a pastor or elder is not married, he is missing out on this training ground and can perhaps lack the needed experience to counsel and shepherd well.
    - There are many good men who make the case for single pastors and elders, so it is difficult to draw a hard line in the sand.
    - But, if the man is not tested in proved in the home life, where does it come from?

4) Looking at **verse 4**, Paul says the man must manage his household well.

- The word manage means to guide, lead and direct.
- He must be active in making sure that his household is going in a godly direction.
- Things like finances, family Bible studies, and anything else the family needs.

- He must do this well. So, well that people around him, other church members, are able to see that he is putting effort into his family.
- **This means that a man may have all the moral qualifications down, but he is not able to elder because his household is not in order.**
- Then Paul says *with all dignity, keeping his children submissive*.
  - I think this is better translated *keeping his children under control with all dignity*.
  - The *dignity* in the passage is referring to the children, not to the man.
  - The elder's children must be obedient and under control.
    - Do not take this as these kids must be perfect. In reality, the kids are simply kids.
    - Just like you and me, they are going to sin, will need to repent, and be forgiven.
  - But your kids should not bring dishonor to you home while they live there.
- Paul qualifies this again at the end of **verse 5** by making the point that if one cannot properly care for one's own family, how can they care for the church.
  - The relationship a man has with his wife and kids will be a direct reflection of how he is going to handle people in the church.
  - The family unit is a smaller size than a church and if he cannot handle that properly, he will not be able to handle a larger one.

5) **Verse 6** just gives some more practical advice for those seeking eldership.

- There needs to be some **testing** and some **visible maturity**. If the elder has never been through any hard times as a believer, there is no way to know how they are going to react when it comes.
- As with all church leaders throughout church history, **pride** is most likely the biggest sin that has been dealt with.
- Pastors think they are something more than what they really are.
- They start to think they are famous or no longer needing God's help, as it were.
- While there is no way to rid someone of pride completely, making sure they are not newly saved is a good place to start.
  - In the last 20 or so years, more Christian leaders have fallen from their positions because of pride.
  - Pride is something that sneaks in, and if you are not defending yourself against it, it will take your life from you.

6) After talking about the man and how he is inside the church and with his family, Paul says in **verse 7** that *the man must have a good reputation outside the church*.

- This means that those outside of your church community, those with whom he works and visits must be able to speak positively about his character.
- If you are someone who is lazy at work or you treat the people at the shop poorly, the church needs to know about that. It is a reflection of your character when you are in the world.
  - This certainly does not mean that all people will agree with you or that all people will like you.
  - The simple fact that you are a believer will bring about condemnation from those who hate the light.
  - They just cannot have anything bad to say about your reputation that would then bring a reproach upon Christ.
- Paul exhorts believers in **Colossians 1:10**, **Ephesians 4:1** and **Philippians 1:27** to walk in a way which brings honor to the Lord.

In **verses 8-13**, Paul moves on from church elders to church deacons.

- Deacons are men who are devoted to the service of God in their local church. Deacons are not inferior to elders as they both have different roles they are to fulfill.
  - Benjamin Merkle: "It seems best to view deacons as servants who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church. Just as the apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the Seven, so the elders are to delegate certain responsibilities to the deacons so that the elders can focus their efforts elsewhere. As a result, each local church is free to define the tasks of deacons based on their particular needs."<sup>2</sup>
  - The interesting thing is that their moral qualifications are practically the same.
  - Though all believers are to do ministry and serve within the church in some form, deacons serve in a variety of ways and places.
  - Some men just serve without the official title and others will have the title and the formal responsibility.
  - There is not an official list of deacon duties in the Bible, but we do know what their character is to be like. These are men with the gift of service who desire to take care of the needs of congregation.
  - Paul is careful to connect this topic of deacons back with the rest of his teaching on church leadership. **He uses the word *likewise* to show that though he is starting a new category, it is in the same subject.**
- 7) So, in **verse 8**, Paul starts with the deacon qualifications.
- First, he says *they must be dignified*

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<sup>2</sup> Matt Waymayer, *TH701 Course Notes* (2023), The Expositors Seminary, 56.



- Being dignified also means *one who is worthy of respect or noble*. Deacons should not be known for being frivolous or just a silly person. They should not try and make light of serious matters but know how to handle themselves with people.
    - This does not mean they are cold and unapproachable.
    - They are men who find real joy in serving and that should be evident to all.
  - They must not be *double-tongued*
    - This could also be translated *two-faced* or *hypocritical*.
    - This means the deacon should not say one thing to one person and then different things to other people. This is not speaking of gossip (though that is not permitted for *any* believer) but rather the motives of what he is communicating.
  - They must *not be addicted to much wine*
    - This means he must not be known to make drinking alcohol a habitual practice.
    - This is similar with an elder. Those in any church leadership need to take special care as to their influence over their flock and those around them.
    - While the Bible never prohibits drinking alcohol, it certainly gives plenty of warnings to its usage.
    - Even to the church that Timothy was an elder at, Paul wrote in **Ephesians 5:18** “**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.**”
      - You are either under the influence of the Spirit or something else.
  - They must *not be greedy for dishonest gain*.
    - While this is important for elders, it is even more important for deacons.
    - Most churches are going to have deacons who take care of the finances. They are going to gather the weekly giving, count the money and then either deposit it or give some sort of an account for it.
    - Many deacons are responsible for giving money to widows and/or other needs in the church.
    - If they are simply trying to be a deacon for money, they will not handle the money correctly and end up stealing what was intended for good use.
- 8) In **Verse 9**, Paul starts getting into a deacon’s spiritual life.
- He says they must *hold fast the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*.
  - The *mystery* which Paul talks about is further explained in **verse 16**
    - Paul says that this mystery is Christ manifested in the flesh. This was a previously hidden truth that is now revealed. This was not known in the Old Testament but is now evident.
  - What does it mean to hold this mystery fast?

- To hold fast carries with it the idea of possessing or owning. Deacons are to own this truth. They are to be fully convinced of this truth.
    - How are they to hold this mystery fast?
      - With a clear conscience.
      - This means that not only is a deacon supposed to own the truth, but he is also supposed to live it out.
    - **This should go to show you that deacons are not to just be men who desire to serve but should be men who have theological knowledge.**
- 9) Then in **verse 10** Paul continues and says the deacon be tested first and then serve if they are proven blameless...just like with the elders.
- This carries the same idea of what Paul talked about concerning elders.
  - It is important to fully understand that this is not a one-time test, but a continual and ongoing testing for deacons.
  - They should have the congregation's approval for being a deacon and come out blameless.
- 10) In **verse 11** we have a bit of tension. There are some that take this verse to say *woman likewise*, which would mean that women can be deacons.
- On the other hand, as we have in in the ESV here, it says *their wives likewise*, giving qualifications for the wives of the deacons.
  - There are good men on both sides of the debate and to be honest, it is not a hill to die on.
  - For our church, we have decided that women are not to be deacons.
  - No matter what side you take after doing your own study, if you decide on women deacons or the wife of deacons, there are high standards for her.
    - He gives those characteristics and firstly says *dignified*
      - This is the same word he uses for men up in **verse 8**...to lead serious lives.
    - *Not slanderers*
      - This means they are not to be one who gossips. They must be able to control their tongue.
    - *Sober-minded*
      - They should not be known for being drinkers but having good judgment.
    - *Faithful in all things*
      - This means that they are to be known as ladies who can be trusted.
- 11) **Verse 12**, Paul echoes similar qualifications for the family as he said regarding the elders.
- They too need to be a one-woman man, one who has eyes for his wife only.
  - They are to also need to manage their home rightly.

- This means they are to care for and give attention to their wives and kids.
- This is, once again, the training ground for church leadership. The home life is so important. As goes the home of church leaders, so goes the church. Time and truth go hand in hand.

12) In **verse 13**, Paul wraps up the teaching on deacons talking about their rewards.

- There is an outward reward that Paul talks about. He says they *gain a good standing for themselves*. This means they are set apart from the rest of the church.
- This is not what they are looking for but because they are exceptional servants and above reproach the church lifts them up.
- The spiritual blessing they receive is *great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus*.
- When deacons serve well and the congregation sees it, they have a confidence in Christ.
  - This means they continue to serve in the grace and power Christ.

## **BRIEF EXCURSES DEACONESSES**

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- I think that it is worth our time to take some time and discuss the issue about women serving as deacons in the church.
- I also think that this is well worth our time talking about because over half of most churches are made up of women.
- We must be able to think through how women are being used by God in the church for His glory, their own good, and for the edification of the church.

### **Arguments For Women Serving as Deacons<sup>3</sup>**

- Lack of qualifications for elders' wives.
  - Why does Paul say nothing about elder's wives in those passages, choosing only to focus on deacon's wives?
    - **HOWEVER:**<sup>4</sup>
    - Because of the difference in qualifications, elders' wives are not able to help their husbands as deacons' wives can.
- The word "likewise" in verse 11.
  - This word seems to indicate a group that is distinct from the male deacons which are mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:8-10 and is significant in their own right.

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<sup>3</sup> Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman*, 227-229.

<sup>4</sup> Waymayer, 58.

- **HOWEVER:**<sup>5</sup>
- The word “likewise” in verse 11 may simply indicate that the wives are to have the same virtues as the male deacons without implying they shared the same office.
- The absence of possessive pronoun “their.”
  - Normally when wives are referenced in the NT, there’s a possessive pronoun which is used. It would say *their wives*, showing how these husbands and wives are related in the context of the sentence.
    - **HOWEVER:**<sup>6</sup>
    - The possessive genitive is not used elsewhere in the NT where men and women are clearly being addressed as wives and husbands (Col 3:18-19; Eph 5:22-25; 1 Cor 7:2-4, 11, 14, 33; Matt 18:25; Mark 10:2).
- Lack of family qualifications.
  - If women deacons are in view, they weren’t necessarily expected to be married.

## **Arguments Against Women Serving as Deacons**<sup>7</sup>

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- **The Placement of Verse 11 Within 1 Timothy 3:8-13**
  - "Because the subject in verses 8-10 and 12-13 is male deacons, it would be unusual for Paul to interrupt this sustained discussion and switch to a new topic (female deacons), only to return to his original subject, especially without an explicit indication of this transition."
  - In contrast, highlighting deacons’ wives in verse 11 fits the context very well, for the wives of deacons would presumably accompany and serve alongside of their husbands without actually assuming the office of deacon."
  - A requirement for wives also fits the context because Paul sees the conduct of a deacon’s family as an essential qualification, and therefore verse 11 is but the first of several “family qualifications” that continue into verse 12."
  - It is therefore simpler and more consistent with the flow of thought to see two offices described in 1 Timothy 3:1-13: the office of elder (vv. 1-7) and the office of deacon (vv. 8-13).
    - **HOWEVER:**
    - “Both views must acknowledge that Paul addresses deacons in the preceding verses (3:8-10), suddenly switches (according to [one] view) to a discussion of their wives or

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Waymayer, 59-61.

(according to the [other] view) to a discussion of women deacons (v. 11), and then returns to the matter of deacons (vv. 12-13)” (Allison).

- Furthermore, Paul’s transition from deacons (in vv. 8-10) to deaconesses (in v. 11) parallels a previous transition from a discussion of men (1 Tim 2:8) to a discussion of women (1 Tim 2:9), with Paul using the same term in both passages to indicate the switch.
- **The Absence of “Deaconess” in 1 Timothy 3:11**
  - Paul’s failure to use the word “deaconess” in verse 11 leaves the reader with no explicit indication that he was referring to female deacons.
    - **HOWEVER:**
    - There was no word for “deaconess” when Paul wrote, thus he used the generic term.
- **The Actual Qualifications Themselves**
  - If verse 11 refers to women deacons, it is difficult to explain why the list of qualifications would be different—and, in fact, much shorter—than the list provided for male deacons.
    - **HOWEVER:**
    - “Because Paul has already covered the similar qualifications for men deacons, he only needs a brief mention of the qualifications for female deacons” (Allison, 245).
- **The Qualification “Husband of One Wife”**
  - The qualification “husband of but one wife” in 1 Timothy 3:12 would most naturally exclude women from the office of deacon.
    - **HOWEVER:**
    - If verse 11 is a reference to deaconesses, then verse 12 is a return to Paul’s discussion of male deacons and therefore this objection would carry no weight.

## **How to handle the situation?**

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- “Those who believe that, biblically, women shouldn’t serve in authoritative church offices should make it especially clear that they are very much for women being involved in active ministry.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Köstenberger, 224.

Finally, in verses 14-16, Paul ends with an exhortation to the church and also a glorious confession.

13) **Verses 14-15**, Paul gives us the reason that he is writing to Timothy.

- He wants to come back to Ephesus (we do not know if he did) but if he delays he wants Timothy to know how to behave in the household of God...namely the church.
- This is in regard to the whole epistle. Paul intends to have Timothy, and subsequently us, take what he has written here and apply it to church order.
- Paul calls the household *the church of the living God*.
  - The church is God's, He bought it with His own blood.
  - This point is worth making to all our churches, the church is the Lord's so all that Paul has said about proper behavior within the church should not be taken lightly. God has prescribed a way to act in the church because it is His.
  - When we decide to add, change or take away what God has commanded, we are essentially taking control of what is God's.
- Paul then describes the church as a *pillar and buttress of the truth*.
  - Paul uses imagery the church at Ephesus would have understood. As Ephesus was well known for the temple to the goddess Diana, its pillars stood out as its greatest feature. They were there to support the massive temple.
  - A buttress of truth means that Paul is referring to the church as not only the pillar of truth but also the foundation of truth.
  - This little phrase should give us an idea of how we are to not only perceive our churches but also the massive responsibility we have to be sure we are teaching the truth.
- One of the main reasons for the letter was to exhort Timothy to make sure there were not false teachers in the church or even influencing those who are in the church. Paul is emphasizing that point here by reminding Timothy what the church is all about.

14) Finally, in **verse 16**, we have a hymn-like or poetic closing of a confession of Christ.

- Paul calls it a mystery again, that is to say something which was hidden in the O.T. but now revealed in the N.T.; who is Christ.
- There is some debate as to what kind of poetic literature this is, but all in all it is a stunning confession and proclamation of the person and life of Christ and the mission and responsibility of the church.