

within a state). At first, the professing community was administered only by the apostles chosen by Christ Himself. However, it soon became apparent that oversight of the temporal needs of the gathered community was necessary, and thus the apostles appointed the first deacons to administer this area of need. A little later, when the disciples (at first without the apostles) were scattered by persecution, and congregations were established in various parts of the empire, including Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, it became apparent that some kind of administrative oversight and leadership was necessary, and elders and deacons were appointed in these congregation, either by apostles, representatives of apostles, or by the people employing apostolically-formulated criteria for the appointment of these officers. Although worship under the New Testament is to take place primarily in the context of the gathered professing community, this does not rule out the appropriateness or utility of family or private worship.

Under the Old Testament, during the period from Adam to Moses, the head of the household appears to have been the administrator of religious exercises. During the period from Moses to the Exile, the administration of religious exercises was committed to divinely appointed religious officials, including priests and teaching Levites. During the period from the Exile to Christ, the administration of religious exercises connected with the Temple was in the hands of the priests and Levites (once the Temple was rebuilt), but the administration of the religious exercises connected with the synagogues was in the hands of ruling elders (with one head elder), synagogue attendants, and teaching Levites.

Under the New Testament, the administration of religious exercises is committed to divinely appointed religious officials, including teaching elders (ministers in the technical sense), ruling elders, and deacons.

Second of all, in addition to these differences in external administration of religious exercises between the Old Testament professing religious community and the New Testament professing religious community, there are no clear differences in the external form of religious exercises between the two professing religious communities.

Under the Old Testament, from Adam to Moses, family and personal worship seems to have been fairly simple, centered mainly in believing contemplation of God and believing obedience to the revealed will of God, chiefly by means of sacrifices and offerings. From Moses to Christ, corporate, family, and personal worship was centered mainly in the sacrifices and offerings connected with the Tabernacle and Temple, the celebration of the regular religious festivals, and the observance of the ceremonial regulations regarding unclean things, purification, dietary strictures, tithes, and the Sabbath. But in addition there were doubtless regular local gatherings under the leadership of teaching Levites, in which believers studied God's Word, prayed, and sang together. Although there were many religious exercises under the Old Testament, there were two that were highlighted in the life of the Old Testament believer: circumcision and Passover. The first was the sign and seal of initiation into the covenant community (both religious and political); the second was the sign and seal of continuation in the covenant community (both religious and political). The spiritual seed of Abraham (believing Israelites) carried out all of these religious exercises as expressions of true saving faith; those who were not Abraham's spiritual seed (not believing Israelites) either