

## Before discussing the organization of the church, let us make this distinction:

- The word “church” sometimes used in a universal sense to include all the saved
  - Matthew 16:18
  - Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:4
- The word “church” sometimes used in a limited sense in a locality
  - 1 Corinthians 1:2
  - Galatians 1:2
  - 1 Thessalonians 1:1
- In this lesson we are exploring the NT teaching about the organization of the local church.
  - The Bible does not speak of an organization on earth larger or smaller than the local church

# Consider Two Important Scriptures

- Ephesians 4:11
- Philippians 1:1
- Note:
  - Saints
  - Apostles
  - Prophets
  - Evangelists
  - Pastors
  - Teachers

# Apostles & Prophets

- Ephesians 4:11
- Ephesians 3:1-6
  - Gospel revealed by the Holy Spirit to apostles & prophets
- Mark 16:17-20; Jude 3
  - Gospel revealed and confirmed
- 1 Corinthians 13:8-10
  - The work of apostles and prophets to cease
- Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Corinthians 3:3-6
  - The apostles' and prophets' teachings the foundation upon which the church is built
- Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Ephesians 1:22-23
  - Jesus Christ Himself the chief cornerstone and Head
- The teaching of Christ and the apostles and prophets governs the church

# In the functioning of the local church:

- Bishops/Pastors/Elders (Ephesians 4:11; Philippians 1:1)
  - Acts 20:17-28; 1 Peter 5:1-4
    - One and the same
  - Elders (v.17)
    - From Greek word “presbuteros”
      - Acts 11:30
      - Acts 14:23
      - 1 Timothy 4:14
  - Overseer (v.28)
    - From Greek word “episkopos” = “to look upon or inspect”
      - Philippians 1:1
      - 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7
      - Hebrews 13:17
  - To shepherd (or feed) (v.28)
    - Verb form of shepherd or pastor; from Greek word “poimaino”
      - Ephesians 4:11
      - 1 Peter 5:2

# Bishops/Pastors/Elders

- One and the same, but consider what the different terms emphasize
- Bishop/Overseer
  - Lead, rule, oversee
  - Not lording it over, but examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3)
  - Rule over (Hebrews 13:17)
    - cf. 1 Timothy 3:5
    - Flock: obey and submit
- Pastor/Shepherd
  - Feeding, watching for, taking care of
  - “...they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” – Heb 13:17
  - “...those entrusted to you” – 1 Pet 5:3
- Elder
  - Signifies age, maturity, wisdom; not a novice – 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

# Bishops/Pastors/Elders: New Testament Principles

- Plurality in a local church
  - Acts 14:23
- No levels or hierarchy
- Oversight of the flock among them
  - 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28
- The goal: Elders in every church

## Also in the functioning of the local church:

- Deacons (Philippians 1:1)
  - From Greek word “diakonos”
    - Over 25x in the NT
    - Translated “deacon” 3 times
  - 1 Timothy 3:8, 12
- Evangelists, teachers (Ephesians 4:11)
  - Acts 13:1
  - 1 Timothy 1:3-4; Titus 1:5
  - 2 Timothy 4:2-5
  - 2 Timothy 2:2

## In the New Testament, each church:

- Received instruction from the apostles
- Managed its own work
  - Edified itself
    - I Cor 12-14
  - Disciplined its own
    - I Cor 5
  - Supported preachers by sending directly to the preacher
    - Phil 4:15-16
  - Relieved its own needy saints
    - Ax 4:32-35
    - Ax 11:27-30 – sometimes received funds from other churches to relieve its own
- ...And so must we!



## In the New Testament, each church:

- Practiced and maintained boundaries of fellowship
  - Made up of the saved
    - Acts 2:41-42
  - Determined incoming fellowship
    - Acts 9:26-28
    - Acts 18:24-27
  - Withdrew themselves from the impenitent:
    - I Cor 5:1, 2, 4, 13
  - Received back the penitent
    - 2 Cor 2:6-8
- ...And so must we!

## In the New Testament, each church:

- Took its marching orders from the apostles, not another church
- Carried out its God-assigned work
  - The church's divinely-appointed organization equipped it sufficiently to carry out its work
- Maintained its own boundaries of fellowship based on the apostles' doctrine
- Was autonomous
- ...And so must we!

# God's design for the local church

- Sufficient in any age and in any culture
  - 2 Pet 1:3
  - 2 Tim 3:16-17
  - Rev 22:18
  - Col 3:17

# Innovations of Men Must be Rejected

- Hierarchy or structure like this:
  - Central organization directing local churches
  - Conference to which representatives are sent to vote to determine policy
  - Headquarters with presidents or board of directors to determine teaching
  - Sponsoring church
- Why reject?
  - No authority for them

# These so-called “improvements” must be rejected:

- Positions or offices like these:
  - “the pastor”
  - The Executive Minister
  - Youth Minister
  - Singles Minister
  - Children’s Minister
  - Donut Ministry Leader
  - Basketball Ministry Leader
  - Youth group
  - Chairmen of the elders
  - Cardinals, archbishops, popes
  - Boards of directors
  - Governing bodies
  - Tiered systems of overseers
- Why reject?
  - No authority for them

## From heaven or from men?

- Innovations and so-called “improvements”:
  - Please men
  - Are popular
  - Are considered advantageous
  - Are deemed reasonable
  - But are lawlessness
    - Mt 7:23
- Such plans:
  - Cannot glorify Christ
  - Cannot be practiced by faith

# God's organization on earth of the called-out

- The local church
  - The saved in a locality
  - Following Christ the Head and the teaching of the apostles and prophets
- With a clearly defined membership
- Oversight of bishops
  - With deacons
- Teachers and Evangelists
- Doing its own work