

The Organization of the Church

Introduction:

The prophecies concerning the future kingdom of God in the OT (i.e., Isa. 2:2ff; Dan. 2:44) are realized in the NT church (I Thess. 2:12). Jesus has all authority in this Kingdom (Col. 1:13). So the kingdom is referred to in the NT as Christ's church (Rom. 16:16). Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (it belongs to Him) (Acts 20:28). The church is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-23) and He serves as its head (Eph. 5:23). The government of the kingdom (the church) is founded in the teachings of Jesus (Eph. 2:18-22). The church is comprised of people who have obeyed the call of the gospel (II Thess. 3:13-14). Church people, in any given locality, comprise a local church whereas Christians through out the world comprise the church universal. This lesson shall examine the organization of the church on the local level (no where do we read of church organization on a universal level). The church is organized locally that its work may be accomplished.

I. Local Church Organization:

- A. When one becomes a Christian, they are added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41).
- B. The church has organization (Phil. 1:1).
- C. The organization of the church is local only (Acts 14:23; 20:28; I Pet. 5:2).
- D. Consider the difference between the local and universal church

II. The Organization of the Local Church:

A. Elders (Acts 20:17-28):

1. Elder (presbuteros) (advanced in years); Bishop (episkopos) (overseer); Pastor or shepherd (poimen) (one who tends the flock).
2. The Elder's labor (I Thess. 5:12) is to oversee, tend, and teach the flock (Eph. 4:11).
3. To serve as elder one "must" meet the qualification outlined in I Tim. 3 and Titus 1
4. Members are to "know them" (I Thess. 5:12), highly esteem them (I Thess. 5:13), and give those who rule well "double honor" (I Tim. 5:17-18).

B. Deacons

1. Servants in the church that execute the commands of another (Matt. 22:13; Phil. 1:1).
2. Their service includes teaching the gospel to the congregation (I Cor. 3:5; II Cor. 3:1ff; 6:4; 11:15; Gal. 2:7) and supplying food and the necessities of life to the poor and sick among the saints (Matt. 25:44; Mk. 1:31; Lk. 8:3, 10:40; Jn. 12:2; Acts 6:2; Rom. 15:25).
3. To serve as deacon one must meet the qualifications outlined in I Timothy 3.

C. Preachers

1. The preacher is one who publicly proclaims the gospel to the church (Eph. 4:11-12) and to the lost (I Cor. 1:21; 3:6-7).
2. The preacher may work locally for any unspecified years. Philip was the evangelist in Caesarea for 24 years (AD 34-58; Acts 8:40; 21:8).

D. Members

1. Those who obey the gospel and are added to the church (Acts 2:38-41).
2. Members are to serve in word and deed (I Cor. 12:24-27).

III. Conclusion:

- A. The church has organization only on a local level to accomplish its work.
- B. The elders, deacons, preacher, and members comprise the church's organization.