

## Lesson 4 – Government of a Church – Outline (to be fleshed out)

### I. The form of government of a local church is congregational.

- A. All authority for governing a New Testament church rests in the congregation – the people.
- B. There are several New Testament examples of this truth. Acts 1:15-26, 6:2-3, 15:2

### II. Internally, the local church is a “theocracy.” Acts 15:22, 16:5, 8:1

- A. Each church individual is to recognize the sovereignty of God.
- B. God and only God is to be accepted as the final authority.

### III. Externally, the local church is a democracy. Acts 15:22, 16:5, 8:1, 6:5

- A. Each church is to have a democratic form of government – of the people, by the people, and for the people.
- B. The local church, by inheritance, is a pure democracy complete unto itself, and therefore cannot join anything like or unlike itself.
- C. Each particular and individual church is actually and absolutely, independent in the exercise of all its churchly rights, privileges, and prerogatives: independent of all other churches, men, and bodies of individuals - under the law of Christ alone.

### IV. False forms of church government.

- A. The prelatical – pertaining to prelate: A prelate is an ecclesiastic of a high order, as an archbishop or a bishop; a church dignitary. [Catholic, Methodists, etc.]
- B. The Presbyterian – The governing powers rest in Assemblies, Synods, Sessions, Presbyterians, or other assemblies of men. [Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc.]

### V. The New Testament makes local church organization plain.

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| A. Local church officers. Philippians 1:1                              | G. Local church order and forms. Acts 2:41-42, 1 Cor 11:23-26         |
| B. Local church elections. Acts 6:5-6                                  | H. Local church standards and uniform practices. 1 Cor 7:17, 14:33-34 |
| C. Regular church meeting. Acts 20:7                                   | I. Local church system of finances. 1 Cor 16:1-3                      |
| D. Local church rolls. 1 Tim 5:9                                       | J. Local church worship and service. 1 Cor 14:40                      |
| E. Church standards for discipline. 1 Cor 5:13                         |   |
| F. Local church authority subordinating members to officers. Heb 13:17 |   |

#### Questions:

- What is a congregational form of a New Testament church?
- Explain how a local church is a democracy. A theocracy.
- Give two forms of false church government.

- Give New Testament examples that make plain church government.

**Discussion:** Why is proper church government important?

## Lesson 4 – Government of a Church

### I. The form of government of a local church is congregational.

A. All authority for governing a New Testament church rests in the congregation – the people.

1. No one man or bishop has authority over a group of churches or a territory of several churches.
2. No one church has authority over another church.

B. There are several New Testament examples of this truth.

1. The nomination of Matthias by the local church. Read Acts 1:15-26 <sup>15</sup>And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) <sup>16</sup>Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. <sup>17</sup>For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. <sup>18</sup>Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. <sup>19</sup>And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. <sup>20</sup>For it is written in the book of Psalms,

*Let his habitation be desolate,*

*And let no man dwell therein:*

*and*

*His bishoprick let another take.*

<sup>21</sup>Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. <sup>23</sup>And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these

*two thou hast chosen, <sup>25</sup>that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. <sup>26</sup>And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

2. The choosing of the first deacons. Read Acts 6:2-3 *<sup>2</sup>Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*
  
3. The sending of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem by the authority of the church at Antioch. Read Acts 15:1-3 *<sup>1</sup>And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. <sup>2</sup>When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. <sup>3</sup>And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.*

## II. Internally, the local church is a “theocracy.”

[theocracy: government by divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided. In many theocracies, government leaders are members of the clergy, and the state's legal system is based on religious law.]



Read:

- Acts 15:22 <sup>22</sup>**Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:** <sup>23</sup>*and they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: <sup>24</sup>forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: **to whom we gave no such commandment:** <sup>25</sup>it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup>men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
  
- Acts 16:5 (from verse 1) <sup>1</sup>*Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: <sup>2</sup>which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup>Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>**And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.***
  
- Acts 8:1 <sup>1</sup>*And Saul was consenting unto his death [i.e.; **Saul wholeheartedly approved of Stephen's death.**] And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, **except the apostles.***

- A. Each church individual is to recognize the sovereignty of God.
- B. God and only God is to be accepted as the final authority.

### III. Externally, the local church is a democracy.

**Read:** Act's verses from above (Acts 16:5, 8:1, 6:5) and...

Acts 6:5 (from verse 1) *<sup>1</sup>And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. <sup>2</sup>Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. <sup>4</sup>But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. <sup>5</sup>**And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: <sup>6</sup>whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.***

- A. Each church is to have a democratic form of government – of the people, by the people, and for the people. Each member is entitled to vote as God leads him. The church abides by the opinion of the majority.
- B. The local church, by inheritance, is a pure democracy complete unto itself, and therefore cannot join anything like or unlike itself. If it did join, it would then, in the larger unit, be only a representative democracy and not the PURE democracy that God made the church.

- C. Each particular and individual church is actually and absolutely, independent in the exercise of all its churchly rights, privileges, and prerogatives: independent of all other churches, men, and bodies of individuals - under the law to Christ alone.

#### IV. False forms of church government.

- A. The prelatial – pertaining to prelate: A prelate is an ecclesiastic of a high order, as an archbishop or a bishop; a church dignitary. [Catholic, Methodists, etc.]
- B. The Presbyterian – The governing powers rest in assemblies, Synods [an assembly of the clergy and sometimes also the laity in a diocese or other division of a particular Church], Sessions, Presbyterians, or other assemblies of men. [Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc.]

#### V. The New Testament makes local church organization plain.

- A. **Local church officers.** Philippians 1:1 *1Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*
- B. **Local church elections.** Acts 6:5-6 *<sup>5</sup>And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: <sup>6</sup>whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.*
- C. **Regular church meeting.** Acts 20:7 *<sup>7</sup>And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*
- D. **Local church rolls.** 1 Tim 5:9 *<sup>9</sup>Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,*
- E. **Church standards for discipline.** 1 Cor 5:13 *<sup>13</sup>But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

- F. Local church authority subordinating members to officers.** Heb 13:17 <sup>17</sup>*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*
- G. Local church order and forms.**
1. Acts 2:41-42 <sup>41</sup>*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup>And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
  2. 1 Cor 11:23-26 <sup>23</sup>*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. <sup>25</sup>After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. <sup>26</sup>For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*
- H. Local church standards and uniform practices.**
1. 1 Cor 7:1 <sup>1</sup>*Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*
  2. 1 Cor 14:33-34 <sup>33</sup>*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. <sup>34</sup>Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*
- I. Local church system of finances.** 1 Cor 16:1-3 <sup>1</sup>*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. <sup>2</sup>Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered*

*him, that there be no gatherings when I come. <sup>3</sup>And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.*

- J. Local church worship and service.** 1 Cor 14:40 *<sup>40</sup>Let all things be done decently and in order.*

**Questions:**

- What is a congregational form of a New Testament church?
- Explain how a local church is a democracy. A theocracy.
- Give two forms of false church government.
- Give New Testament examples that make plain church government.

**Discussion:** Why is proper church government important?