

PART FIFTH CHURCH GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION: We undertake a study in the next four lessons of the divine plan for the organization of the Church. The scriptures furnish us unto a plan of church government as well as a plan of worship and work. To believe in and accept God's Word as divinely inspired and therefore all-sufficient then requires recognition of the completeness and perfection of the organization of the Church. To undertake to improve upon the Church by reorganization, adding to, or failing to respect God's arrangement for it is to express dissatisfaction with God's ways. We should be moved by the spirit of faith to be satisfied with doing God's work in God's way. The Church of God is able to do all that God wants done upon the earth.

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LESSON XIX—THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

I. Two Uses of Word “Church” In New Testament:

1. Universal, comprehensive sense including all saved of the earth (Matt. 16:18; I Tim. 3:15; Eph. 1:22, 23). In this sense the family of God, Body of Christ, kingdom of God, are the same (see Lessons I to 6 on “The Nature of the Church”). No organization in universal sense, knows no authority but Christ and His word. Whoever does the will of God and obeys the Gospel belongs to it (Acts 2:41, 47).
2. Local Churches, limited sense including all God’s people in one community. (I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16; Acts 14:23; 5:11; 8:1), “In Jerusalem” (Acts 13:1; 15:22). “In Antioch.”

II. The Organization of the Local Church:

1. An established order (Acts 14:23) “In every Church” (Titus 1:5) “Set in order the things that are lacking.”
2. An independent self-governing unit, always spoken of as separate units (Gal. 1:2) “Churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:22), “Churches of Judea.” Several independent Churches in one district, but no district organization (I Cor. 14:33, 40). In this comprehensive injunction, given to a Church, is implied control of its affairs by the Church.
3. A plurality of elders in every Church (Acts 14:23), “Ordained elders in every Church.” Elders of the Ephesian Church (Acts 20:17).
4. Deacons (Phil. 1:1), Bishops and deacons of Phillipian Church.
5. Members (Rom. 12:4, 16:1, 2; I Cor. 12:27). Identification with a local Church was a practice of New Testament days.

III. Local Organization Only Medium Through Which Early Christians Worked:

1. New Testament mentions no other.
2. Every good work done through local organization (Eph. 3:10).
 - a. Missions (Acts 13:1-3). Sent out by local church; (Acts 14:25-28). Reported to local church.
 - b. Charity (Acts 11:29, 30). Funds for poor saints in Judea were placed in hands of elders of Judean churches to be administered by them.
 - c. Various scriptural methods may be used in, carrying on the work of the local Church, but other organizations either within or without, such as Ladies’ Aid Societies or Young Peoples’ Societies were unknown then and are therefore unscriptural now.

IV. Cooperation of Local Churches:

1. Local Churches cooperated in doing their work, but such work was always under the supervision of a local church and its eldership (Rom. 15:25-26; II Cor. 8:1-5; Acts 11:28- 30).

Questions For Discussion

1. Give two senses in which the term "Church" is used in the New Testament.
2. Is there any universal organization of the Church?
3. What is the mission of the local Church?
4. How completely were the local Churches organized; give the officials.
5. What is God's medium of working?
6. How did the early churches do mission work, care for the poor, and the work of edification? Through what medium?
7. Give examples of such work.
8. What is wrong with the various "aids" societies?
9. How may local churches cooperate in any good work?
10. Under whose supervision should all work of the Church be done?