

LESSON 8-THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH



(Ephesians 1:22-23), “And He put all things under His feet, and **gave Him to be head over all things to the church**, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

(James 4:12). “**There is one Lawgiver**, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”

(Acts 14:23). “So when they had **appointed elders in every church**, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

(Acts 20:28) “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to **shepherd the church** of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

(I Peter 5:1-2). “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly”

(I Peter 5:3-4). “nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and **when the Chief Shepherd appears**, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

I. CHRIST GAVE HIS CHURCH A CONGREGATIONAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT

(Acts 14:23). “So when they had **appointed elders in every church**, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

(Heb. 13:17) “**Obey those who rule over you**, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

THESE ELDERS, BISHOPS, OR PASTORS OVER EACH LOCAL CHURCH HAD JURISDICTION ONLY OVER THE FLOCK AMONG THEM OR OVER WHICH THEY HAD BEEN MADE BISHOPS.

(1 Pet. 5:2) “Shepherd the flock of God **which is among you**, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;”

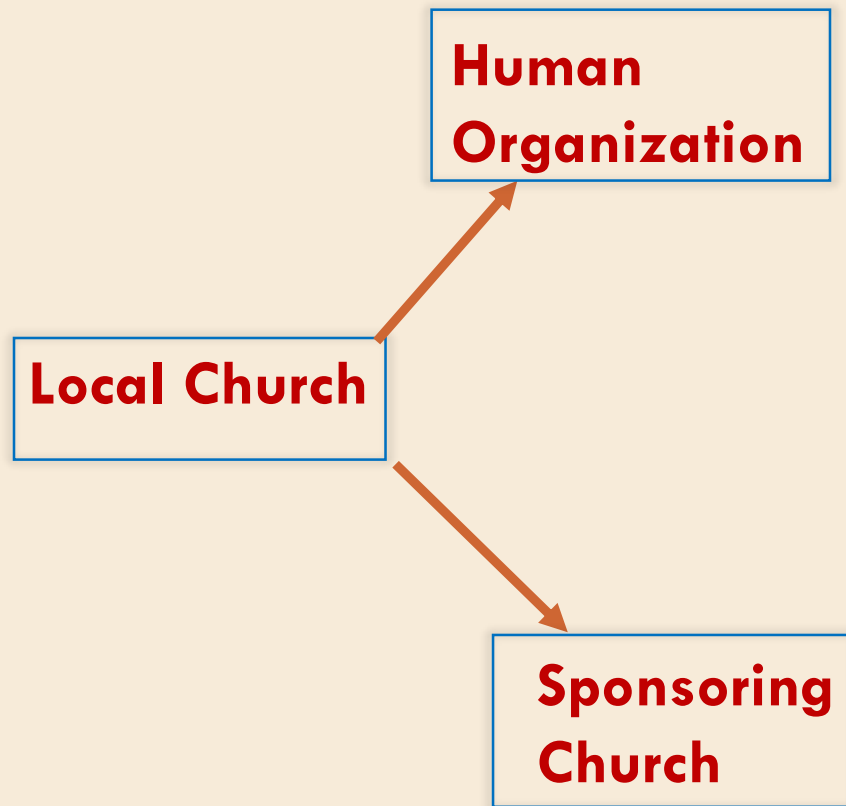
Acts 20:28. “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among **which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Divine arrangement specified:

Organization of the church— Which?

Not This...

But This...



THE CONGREGATION WAS THE ONLY MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH FUNCTIONED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF ITS MISSION.

(Acts 11:22). “Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and **they sent out Barnabas** to go as far as Antioch”

(Phil. 4:15-16) “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, **no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.** 16 For even in Thessalonica **you sent aid once and again for my necessities.**”

THE LOCAL CHURCH MADE UP ITS OWN FUNDS FOR BENEVOLENT WORK

(1 Cor. 16:1-4) “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 **On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside**, storing up **as he may prosper**, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.”

QUESTION:

What instructions does Paul give the Corinthian church as to how to prepare their offering?

QUESTION:

According to verses 3-4, how would the Corinthian church's offering be transported to Jerusalem?

THERE IS NOTHING WHICH GOD HAS ORDAINED THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD DO THAT CANNOT BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THE ORGANIZATION WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN IT - THE LOCAL CONGREGATION.

(Rom. 12:4-5). “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 **so we, being many, are one body** in Christ, and individually members of one another.”

(1 Thess. 5:11-13). “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. 12 And we urge you, brethren, to **recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,** 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.”

III. NO CHURCH BECAME THE AGENT OF ANOTHER CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT DAY

- All churches bore an equal relationship to whatever work they cooperated in doing.

- Agency cannot exist without subordination.

CONCLUSION:

High pressure promotion programs sponsored by one church and financed by money solicited from other churches, sponsoring arrangements for cooperation among churches, and one church acting as the agency through which many churches do their work will all eventually lead to the complete surrender of autonomy, independence, and equality and therefore to the destruction of congregational government.