

THE DIVINE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Introduction

- 1) The church of Christ is a divine institution (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28)
- 2) If the church is to have any organization, it must be divinely authorized (Matt. 28:20)
- 3) Jesus is the head of the church, which is His body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23)

I) “Church”

- A) **Church** is a translation of Greek *ekklesia* – lit. *ek* “out from and to” and *kaleo* “to call”; an assembly (Acts 19:32); in a religious context, people called out from the world to God by the gospel, an assembly of Christ
- B) **Universal** – Christ as head of the body – all saints on the earth (Col. 1:18)
 - 1) No earthly organizational structure revealed for the church universal
 - a) No earthly headquarters, head, president, pope, council, synod, board
- C) **Local** – God’s saints in a locality who are worshiping and working together (Col. 4:16; Rom. 16:16; Gal. 1:2; Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 2-3)

II) Organization of the Local Church

- A) Divine order: **Elders** (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) and **Deacons** (Phil. 1:1)
- B) Plurality of elders and deacons in a local church (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1)
- C) Saints/Members – identified with local church (Phil. 1:1; Acts 9:26)
 - 1) All are to work toward growth of body of Christ (Eph. 4:16)
- D) Each congregation is an independent, self-governing unit under the common authority of Christ and His word (Phil. 4:15-16; 1 Pet. 5:2; 1 Cor. 4:17)
- E) The local church and organization
 - 1) Scripturally organized – *has qualified elders and deacons appointed*
 - 2) Scripturally unorganized – *has no men qualified to be appointed elders and deacons*
 - 3) Unscripturally organized – *has unqualified men appointed as elders and deacons*
– *has other forms of human organization*
 - 4) Unscripturally unorganized – *has qualified men not appointed as elders and deacons*

III) Elders, Overseers, Shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2)

- A) **Presbuteros** – an elder, either of 1) age, or 2) of rank or positions of responsibility; has reference to maturity of spiritual experience
- B) **Episkopos** – literally, an overseer (*epi* = over; *skopeo* = to look or watch), bishop; reference to the character of the work undertaken (overseeing life and work of others)
- C) **Poimen** – a shepherd, pastor; one who feeds and tends flocks; the service committed to elders/bishops; involves ideas of tender care and vigilant superintendence; does *not* refer to the work of an evangelist, preacher (see Eph. 4:11)

IV) Deacons – Servants (Philippians 1:1)

- A) **Diakonos** – primarily a servant, minister, attendant; a commonly used term in the NT
 - 1) General (common) usage (Matt. 20:26-28)
 - a) All who serve: *Christ, apostles, evangelists, all faithful Christians, civil authorities, Satan’s servants, woman servants, waiters at feasts*
 - 2) Specific (special) usage
 - a) A particular work and office (1 Tim. 3:13 “the office of a deacon” KJV)
 - b) Certain qualifications for a particular service

V) Appointment of Elders and Deacons

A) Sober and important task in a local church

- 1) Study divine qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:6-9)
- 2) Seek among members for men qualified to serve (Acts 6:3)
- 3) Appoint men qualified, chosen, and who desire the work (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23)
 - a) Appointed by an evangelist (Titus 1:5)

Conclusion

Let us respect the divine organization of the church and understand the manifold wisdom of God which is made known by the church (Eph. 3:10-11). Are you a member of the church and body of the Savior (Eph. 5:23)?