

Lesson 14-18

The Doctrine of the Church

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:18-20

I. Why is it so important to study the doctrine of the Church?

- A. Because the Church is the only institution that Christ ever purposed to build (Mt. 16:18).

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

- B. Because the Church was in God’s plan from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-5, 9-12; II Tim. 1:9).

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel... II Timothy 1:9-10

- C. Because the Church is the vehicle through which God’s eternal purpose will be accomplished (Eph. 3:8-11).

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord...

- D. Because the Church is the apple of God’s eye and the Bride of Christ (Eph.5:25-32).

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:29-33

II. What does the word “church” mean?

- A. Because of the English use of the word “church”, we may have a wrong understanding of the biblical meaning of the word. The church, as spoken of in the Bible, is not:
1. A building for Christian worship as, “we built a new church last year.”
 2. A regular religious service or public worship as, “we went to church on Sunday.”
 3. A denomination or sect as the Roman Catholic Church, the Pentecostal Church or the Presbyterian Church.
- B. The word “church” in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* which literally means “called out ones.”
1. In Greek society an *ekklesia* was an assembly of free citizens called out from their homes or places of business to give consideration to matters of public interest (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).
 4. In relation to God’s people, it refers to all those people who have been called out from the world (I Pet. 2:9), who have separated themselves unto God and who have gathered unto the Lord for worship and fellowship.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

III. What did Jesus teach concerning the Church?

Jesus specifically mentioned the church twice in His teaching and in each case He referred to a different aspect of the church.

- A. In Matthew 16:13-19 Jesus referred to **the universal church** (also called the invisible, mystical or catholic church) that consists of all believers living and dead from all ages who have been called out of the world system and who have separated themselves unto Christ.

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will

build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

1. Jesus implied that the universal church would be:
 - a. Based on the confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (vs. 15-17).\
 - b. Built by Christ Himself when He said, “I will build...” (vs. 18).
 - c. Owned by Christ Himself when He said, “My church” (vs. 18).
 - d. Unified into one when He said, “church” and not “churches” (vs. 18).
 - e. Victorious over the powers and authority of hell (vs. 18-19).
 - f. Powerfully administrating God’s heavenly kingdom on earth (vs. 19).
 - g. Fully supported and backed up by heaven’s authority (vs. 19).
2. Paul adds to the concept of the universal church in the Book of Ephesians (Eph. 1:22; 3:10; 3:21; 5:25-32).
 - a. The Church is the spiritual body of Christ and is to be under His headship (Eph. 1:15-22).

*Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 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. Ephesians 1:15-22*

- b. The Church is the instrument of God to bring forth the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:10-11).

...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according

to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord...

Ephesians 3:10-11

- c. The church is not a temporary institution. It is for all generations and on into eternity (Eph. 3:20-21).

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

- 5. The development of the universal Church can be outlined in five steps.
 - a. It was conceived in the mind of God from all eternity (Eph. 3:9).
 - b. It was provided for on the cross by Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28).
 - c. It was birthed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21).
 - d. It has been growing throughout the ages (Acts 8:5-25; 10:1-48; 28:31).
 - e. It will culminate at the return of Christ when the bride will be ready to be united with her heavenly husband (Rev. 19:7-8).

- B. In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus referred to **the local church** (also called the visible church) or a specific body of believers in a given locality.

Ask class to close notebook, open their Bibles, read along with Matthew 18:15-20. Ask them to think of anything that this passage tells them about the local church.

Read the following passage and see what it implies about the local church. We will see that a local church is more than just two or three people gathered together in a home for mutual support and edification. There are quite a number of ingredients that make up this thing called the local church.

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Jesus implied that the local or visible church would be:

- 1. Composed of people who are called “brothers” (vs. 15).

Implications:

- The local church is a place of committed relationships.
- The local church is meant to be a family setting.
- The local church is a place of close relationships.
- The local church is to be a place of belonging.

2. An assembly where accountability exists between members (vs. 15-17).

Implications:

- The local church is not perfect; there will be problems to work through.
- The local church must be committed to the process of conflict resolution.
- The local church is a place where God has provided the means for conflicts to be resolved.

3. An assembly where discipline occurs (vs. 15-17).

Implications:

- The local church is not a loose knit group having no responsibility or accountability toward one another (we are our brother's keeper).
- The local church is a place where we get involved in each other's lives.
- The local church is a place where sin is confronted and discipline is administered.

4. An assembly where God has established authority (vs. 18).

Implications:

- The local church is vested with the authority of heaven.
- God supports the disciplining actions of the local church.
- To be disciplined by the local church is to be disciplined by Christ.

5. A defined body from which you could be expelled (vs. 17).

Implications:

- The local church is a place where you are known to be a part.
- The local church is a place from which you can be expelled.
- You are either a part of a local church or you are not.

6. An assembly of fellowship in faith and prayer (vs. 19).

Implications:

- The local church is a place of gathering together.
 - The local church is a place of corporate asking.
 - The local church is a place where there is an expectation for God to act.
7. An assembly where Christ promises to dwell (vs. 20).

Implications:

- The local church is a habitation for God by His Spirit.
 - The local church is place of a unique manifestation of God's presence.
8. An assembly that gathers around the name of Christ (vs. 20).

Implications:

- The local church is dedicated to the exaltation of Christ.
 - The local church carries the authority of the name of Christ.
 - The local church is to be a representative of that name to the world.
9. An assembly that is based on unity for its success (vs. 19).

Implications:

- Its power is dependent upon it.
 - The presence of God is released when it occurs.
 - It is something that must be worked at (Eph. 4:1-3).
10. An assembly whose success is going to be dependent upon a lot of love, patience and forgiveness (vs. 21ff).

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22

IV. What aspect of the Church is the major focus of the New Testament?

- A. Out of approximately 110 references to the Church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, clearly 96 of these references refer to the local or the visible church.
- B. As believers, it is vital that we focus on and emphasize what God emphasizes.

V. What are some of the names and titles of the Church?

- A. There are many names and titles associated with the church. Each one of them refers to a different aspect of the church which represents God's manifold (many faceted) wisdom of God (Eph. 3:9-10).

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Hebrews 12:18-24

1. The City of the Living God (Heb. 12:22)
 2. The Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12:23)
 3. The House of the Lord (Heb. 3:6; I Tim. 3:5)
 4. The Church of the Living God (I Tim. 3:5)
 5. The Pillar and Ground of Truth (I Tim. 3:5)
 6. The Israel of God (Gal. 6:16)
 7. Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22)
 8. Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26)
 9. God's Husbandry or Field (I Cor. 3:9).
 10. A Golden Lampstand (Rev. 1:20)
- C. Actually there are over seventy names and titles in both the Old and New Testaments that refer directly or indirectly to the Church of Jesus Christ.

VI. What is the relationship of the Church in the Old Testament to the Church in the New Testament?

- A. In the Old Testament God had His "called out ones." Israel was God's chosen nation who was to be His instrument to touch the nations of the world and bring forth the Messiah (Acts 7:38; Ex. 19:6).

This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us...

Acts 7:37-38, KJV

1. Israel was an object of God's grace (Deut. 7:6-10).
2. Israel was called out of bondage (Ex. 3:7-8).
3. Israel experienced a Passover deliverance (Ex. 12).
4. Israel became separated unto God by virtue of baptism in the sea and in the cloud (I Cor. 10:1-4).
5. Israel was to be distinct from the pagan nations (Ex. 11:7; Lev. 20:22-26).

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. I Corinthians 10:1-4

B. In the New Testament God has His "called out ones." The Church is God's chosen nation which is His instrument to touch the nations and demonstrate kingdom glories and virtues (I Pet. 2:4-10).

1. We were objects of God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9).
2. We were called out of bondage (Eph. 2:1-3).
3. We have experience our personal Passover deliverance (I Cor. 5:7-8).
4. We have been separated unto God by virtue of water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 6-8).
5. We are to be distinct from the world system (John 15:18-19; 17:14-17; II Cor. 6:14-18).

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:1-9

C. There is a connection between the church of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament.

1. The Old Testament church, which was established by the prophets, serves as a foundation for the New Testament church, which was established by the apostles (Eph. 2:19-22).

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

2. The Old Testament church looked forward to Christ while the New Testament church is built upon Christ (I Pet. 2:6-8; I Cor. 3:10-11).

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected as become the chief cornerstone," and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. I Peter 2:6-8

3. The connection is seen in the titles given to the people of God in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Title	O.T. Church	N.T. Church
A Chosen People	Deut. 10:15	I Pet. 2:9
A Holy Nation	Ex. 19:6	I Pet. 2:9
A Priesthood	Ex. 19:6	I Pet. 2:9
The People of God	Ps. 100:3	II Cor. 6:16
Israel	Is. 44:6	Gal. 6:16
The Flock of God	Jer. 23:3	I Pet. 5:2
A Light	Is. 60:1, 3	Mt. 5:14
God's Witness	Is. 43:10	Acts 1:8

4. The great mystery hidden for ages but preached by the apostles was that the Jew and the Gentile were made one (Eph. 2:14; 3:5-6), in one body, one building, built upon the foundation laid by the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles, Christ being the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20-22).

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a

holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

VII. What does the book of Ephesians reveal to us about the Church?

The Book of Ephesians has been titled “The Book of the Church” because of the rich revelation concerning the church that is found in it. Five beautiful pictures of the church are found in Ephesians, each one filling out and adding to our overall understanding of and appreciation for the church.

A. The Church as the Temple or House of God (Eph. 2:19-22).

1. A temple is to be a habitation for God (Eph. 2:22).
2. A temple is built by someone (Heb. 3:1-6).
3. A temple is composed of stones (I Pet. 2:4).
4. A temple is a place where priests function (I Pet. 2:4).
5. A temple is a place of sacrifice (I Pet. 2:4).

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. 3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, 6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. Hebrews 3:1-6

B. The Church as the Family of God (Eph. 3:14-15).

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...

1. In the family we have a heavenly Father (Gal. 4:4-7).
2. In the family we have a firstborn and elder brother (Heb. 2:14-17).
3. In the family we have other brothers and sisters (I Pet. 1:22).
4. In the family we are all partakers of the same blood (Eph. 2:13).
5. In the family we all share the same name (Rev. 22:4).
6. In the family we share a common inheritance (I Pet. 1:3-4).

C. The Church as the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

1. Each member of the body has a unique function (Rom. 12:4-5).
2. Each member of the body is inter-related to other members (I Cor. 12:17).
3. Each member of the body submits to the one head (Eph. 1:22-27).
4. Each member of the body is vital and necessary (I Cor. 12:19-26).

D. The Church as the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-32).

1. As the bride we are espoused to one husband (II Cor. 11:2).
2. As the bride we must make ourselves ready for marriage (Rev. 19:7-8).
3. As the bride we must enter into covenantal relationship with Christ (I Cor. 6:16-17).
4. As the bride we must remain faithful and keep ourselves pure (II Cor. 11:2).
5. As the bride we will be part of a great wedding celebration (Rev. 19:6-10).

G. The Church as the Army of God (Eph. 6:10-20).

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. II Timothy 2:3-4

1. In the army we have a captain and a chief leader (Heb. 2:10).
2. In the army we are enlisted as good soldiers (II Tim. 2:3-4).
3. In the army we are involved in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12).
4. In the army the armor is provided by God (Eph. 6:13-18).
5. In the army our weapons are not carnal but mighty (II Cor. 10:3-5).
6. In the army of God we will be victorious and be instrumental in destroying the gates of hell (Mt. 16:18).

VIII. What does the Bible teach about the government of the local church?

A. The local church should function as an autonomous body.

1. The word “autonomous” means “independent, self-governing.” It comes from two Latin words which literally mean “self” (*auto*) and “law” (*onomos*).
2. Our definition of autonomy as it relates to the local church is:

“Self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating”

3. A local church that is self-governing looks to no outside authority, no special group functioning outside or above itself to effect its decisions. The local church is the final court of appeal:
 - a. For disputes between believers (Mt. 18:15-17).
 - b. For questions of doctrine (Acts 15).
 - c. For discipline of moral conduct (I Cor. 5:1-5).

B. The New Testament presents four basic facts concerning church government.

1. Bible Fact #1 – God has established government in His House (the Church).

Most people will acknowledge the fact that there is government in the family realm (Eph. 6:1) and in the realm of civil government (Rom. 13:1), but many of those same people do not see the local church as an authority in their lives. In relation to the local church, the Bible says that we are to obey those who have the rule over us (Heb. 13:17).

- a. With no government there will be a lack of order (I Cor. 14:40; Col. 2:5). God is not the author of confusion. In the book of Judges, when everyone did what was right in their own eyes it led to a weakened condition among God’s people.
- b. There are those who rule in the House of God (Heb. 13: 7, 17, 24; Rom. 12:8).

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Hebrews 13:7

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. Hebrews 13:17

2. Bible Fact #2 – God has a plan and pattern for government in His House. When building God’s house we have some choices. Our pattern can come from various sources. It can come from:

a. The World System

This happens when we bring the systems of the world into the local church. Certainly the local church can learn from the world of business in operating its affairs in a proper way, but the local church is more than a business and God will often require “steps of faith” that do not make good business sense.

b. Religious Tradition

Every believer has come from some tradition. Our tradition represents the way we have always done things. But sometimes the way we have always done things is in conflict with the Word of God. The last words of any church are, “We never did it that way before.” Our traditions must be subject to the Word of God.

c. The Mind of Regenerate Man

Sometimes we can feel that since we are a Christian all of our good ideas are from God. Just because we are sincere, it does not mean that we can do no wrong. We can actually be sincerely wrong. David was sincere, but wrong when he first tried to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. It was only as he sought God according to God’s order that he found success (I Chr. 15:13).

d. God

Our pattern must come from God.

- God is a God of order and has a pattern and plan for everything that He does (Gen. 1). He had a plan in the creation of the world and He carried it out in an orderly fashion.
- God is very detailed and exact about how He wants things done (Leviticus). God was very detailed and exacting in his description of the worship of Israel and in the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25-40).
- God provided the pattern for every structure that He ever commanded to be built (Gen. 6:1-6; Ex. 25:9, 40; I Chr. 28:11-19). He did not leave these decisions into the mind of man.
- The glory of God can only fill that which is according to the pattern (Ex. 40:33-34). Had Moses tampered with the pattern given on the mount, the result would have been much different.
- The pattern can not be violated if we are to experience the full blessing of

God (Gen. 4:1-3). We may experience a measure of blessing, but not the full blessing. Those who tampered with the pattern (e.g. Nadab and Abihu, Cain, Uzziah, etc.) experienced the judgment of God and separation from His presence.

- The plan of God is universally applicable and is never out of date. If the Book of Acts and the epistles do not represent God's pattern for the Church, then God did not give us a pattern. But that thought is totally inconsistent with everything we know about God and His Eternal Purpose.

3. Bible Facts #3 – God identifies the rulers in His House as elders (I Tim. 3:5; 5:17). There are many forms of government that God could have chosen.

a. Dictatorship or “One Man Rule”

This is a very simple form of government. Decisions can be made very quickly. But since it is built on one person, the local church is only as strong as that person is strong. Since no leader is perfect everyone needs a system of checks and balances to ensure that the local church stays on track.

b. Democracy or “Rule by the People”

In a growing church the new people always outnumber those who have been Christians for a long time. Democracy ends up being a “rule by the immature” since they will always have the swing vote. This would never work in the natural family and it will not work in the local church.

c. Central Control or “External Control”

This is government that comes from outside of the local church. While the local congregation may have some latitude, the primary decisions are in the hands of those who are not a part of the local scene. This can hinder the local church in tailoring its programs to the unique nature of its city or community.

d. Deacon Board or “Rule by an Elected Board”

This form of government is where members of “The Board” are elected by the people for terms of office ranging from one to three years. In these situations there may or may not be biblical qualifications for those who serve and there is usually a constant turnover of leadership in the Church.

e. Co-Equal Plurality of Elders

This form of government acknowledges the biblical pattern of elders in the local church, but fails to see the principle of headship. All elders are seen as equal in function which leads to the same result as a committee that functions

without a designated leader. It simply cannot go forward and accomplish the desired task.

God did not choose any of these forms for His House.

f. Elders with a Chief Elder (or Pastor). This is clearly God’s choice. This has two parts:

i. A Plurality of Elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; I Tim. 5:17; James 5:14).

Elders of the church are always referred to in the plural. Actually, in order to have some checks and balances, there needs to be at least three elders.

ii. One Senior or Chief Elder (Acts 12:17; 15:4-7, 12, 13, 22; 21:15-18; Phil. 4:1-3).

James, the brother of the Lord, functioned as the senior elder or senior pastor of the Church at Jerusalem. In addition, when the Lord addressed the local churches in the Book of Revelation, He addressed His letter to the set man or the “*angelos*” (messenger) of the churches (Rev. 2:1).

iii. This has always been God’s form of government. God has always used plural leadership with one of those leaders placed as head (See Chart below).

- In the Godhead (I Jn. 5:7; I Cor. 11:3)
- In the Family (Gen. 2:24; I Cor. 11:3)
- In Israel (Num. 11:16-17; 27:16-17)
- In the Synagogue (Acts 13:15; 18:8,17)
- In the Church (Tit. 1:5; Acts 21:18)

	Equality	Headship
The Godhead	Three Persons	Father
The Family	Two Parents	Husband
Israel	70 Elders	Moses
The Synagogue	Elders/Rulers	Chief Ruler
The Church	Elders	Chief Elder

4. Bible Fact #4 – God determines the kind of individuals that are to be rulers in His House (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. I Timothy 3:1-7

Strict adherence to the guidelines given in the New Testament is the only thing that will ensure the fact that this form of government is any better than the other forms described above. It is the fact that the leaders of the local church have demonstrated through their personal lives that they are personally submitted to Christ, are an example for others to follow and have a track record of hearing from God that makes them candidates for leadership. Christ can rule through these kinds of people.

We can summarize the qualifications listed by Paul into four categories.

- a. They must be people with **proven character**. That is, they have allowed the work of sanctification to take place in their lives and they manifest the fruit of the Spirit.
- b. They must be people of **spiritual vision**. That is, they have a vision to see God's purposes established and they have the maturity to make sacrifices in the present to see those purposes come to pass.
- c. They must be people with their **homes in order**. That is, they have demonstrated their ability to rule and provide pastoral covering for the church by virtue of the fact that they have established the Kingdom of God in their own homes.
- d. They must be people with the **spiritual gifting** for this ministry. That is, they are not only good people but they have a gift of leadership or the "charisma" needed to enable them to teach and to exhort and convince those who oppose the Gospel (Heb. 13:7).

These are virtually the same qualifications that were laid out in the Old Testament for the elders who served under Moses. God's leaders were to be "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Ex. 18:21).

Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

IX. What is the ministry and mission of the Church?

The church has a four-fold ministry:

- A. The church has a ministry to the Lord. The chief ministry of the church is that of worshipping and glorifying God (I Cor. 10:31).
- B. The church has a ministry to itself. The members of the church have a responsibility to do everything they can to build or edify the church (Eph. 4:9-16; I Cor. 14:12).
- C. The church has a ministry to the world (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-20; II Cor. 5:18-19). The church is to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and teach men and women the ways of God.
- D. The church has a ministry in connection with principalities and powers (Eph. 1:20-23; I Cor. 15:24-26). The church is going to be used by God to share in Christ's victory and to bring about the downfall and utter demise of Satan and his evil hosts (Rom. 16:20).

Note: For a more exhaustive study of the doctrine of the church refer to the course titled Local Church.