

The Organization of the Church

*“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons:”
Philippians 1:1*

Review of previous four lessons:

- The NT church is the kingdom of God foretold of in the OT (cf. Dan. 2:28, 44; Acts 20:28 / Rev. 5:9-10) and was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff).
- The church is comprised of **people** who have been **called out** of the world of sin to serve God (I Pet. 2:9-10).
- Church people **assemble** (Acts 11:26; 14:27; I Cor. 11:18; Heb. 12:23) in their **local areas** (Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; I Cor. 1:2) on the **first day of the week** (Acts 20:7) to **worship** God (Acts 20:7ff).
- The church not only worships but has the **work** of evangelizing, edifying its members, and providing benevolence to its needy.
- The word of God reveals **organization** within the church that God’s authorized work for it might be completed.

Modern day Organization:

- To err is to violate God’s will (Numb. 15:17).
- Jehovah’s Witnesses are directed by a 12 member governing body that “oversees the worldwide congregation” (watchtower.org).
- The Mormon church has a president over 12 apostles, 70 quorum, stakes, wards, bishops, and congregational members.
- The worldwide Roman Catholic church is overseen by the pope (potiff or vicor of Christ on earth).
- A “growing trend” among churches of Christ today is the “Multi-site Satellite campuses.” One church eldership oversees a multitude of “planted churches” (see The Christian Chronicle V. 64, no. 4; April 2007. One Church, two Locations, pp. 1).

Does the NT reveal church organization to accomplish its Work?

- Yes. The scriptures reveal a clear distinction between the local (I Cor. 1:1) and universal church (Acts 9:31) when it comes to accomplishing its work (see Phil. 4:15).
- Let us understand that when one is baptized for the forgiveness of sins they become a member of the church universal (i.e., The kingdom of God) (Acts 2:41). Jesus is the head of this universal church of people who have cast off sin and purposed to follow Christ (Eph. 1:22).
- The NT simplistically exposes the fact that members of the kingdom of God assembled together locally as opposed to coming together as a whole the world over (Acts 20:7ff). Each of these local churches were organized with elders, deacons, and saints (cf. Phil. 1:1).

Elders / Presbyters / Bishops in every church (Acts 14:23):

- God had always planned to ordain elders / bishops / presbyters over the local church only (cf. Acts 20:17, 28).
- These **elders** (older men of experience) were to “*tend the flock of God which is among you,...*” as **bishops** (I Pet. 5:2). The elders are **pastors** in the sence that they are to “*feed the church*” (Acts 20:28).
- Members of the church are commanded to “*know*” (I Thess. 5:12), highly “*esteem them*” for their work (I Thess. 5:13), honor (I Tim. 5:17-18), and “*obey and submit*” to them (Heb. 13:17).
- The elders of the congregation must be worthy of such work and honor among the brethren (cf. I Tim. 3:1-7).

Deacons (servants) in the Body of Christ (The “Do all Guys”):

- The church had an early need for these servants (cf. Acts 6:1ff).
- These men would supply food and the necessities of life; i.e. to take care of the poor and the sick in the body of Christ (Matt. 25:44; Mk. 1:31; Lk. 8:3, 10:40; Jn. 12:2; Acts 6:2; Rom. 15:25).
- Deacons serve the congregation spiritually by teaching the gospel (I Cor. 3:5; II Cor. 3:1ff; 6:4; 11:15; Gal. 2:7).
- The Deacon executes the commands of the elders as a servant (Matt. 22:13; 23:11; Mk. 9:35, 10:43; Jn. 2:5, 9).
- Who may serve as deacons (I Tim. 3:8-13)?

Preachers in the Local Churches:

- The preacher does not occupy an official office as do the elder and deacon within the church; however, as members exist in the church so do preachers.
- There are qualifications for a man to meet if he desires to be a preacher. First. One must be found faithful (I Cor. 4:1-2). Secondly, the preacher will preach truth in love that brethren may be edified (Eph. 4:15). Thirdly, the preacher is willing to spend much time in Bible study and teaching (cf. I Tim. 4:13).

Members: Rom. 12:3-6; I Cor. 12:12ff