Introduction: A good while ago I gave a lesson on the church explaining the different usages in the Bible the word ekklisia. Explaining it meant anything from a assembly of people such as a town meeting or a riot, to the children of Israel in the wilderness, to the church Jesus promised to build. In this lesson we are going to talk about the universal church and the local congregation as defined in the Bible.

**I) the Universal Church**

**A) Built and established by Jesus, Matthew 16:18**

1. Jesus is the head of the church

**Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

2. He is the foundation of the church

**1 Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

3. He is the Savior of the body

**Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body**.

a. He died on the cross, shed His blood

b. It is through His blood we have redemption.

4. Cannot have any other founder, no other head, no one else died for the church.

**B) Doctrine of Christ is its only teaching**

**1.** It is through the Gospel man is saved, Romans 1.16

2. The apostles went out preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,**

3. The Apostles teaching is part of the “Doctrine of Christ”

**1 Timothy 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

**C) It is composed of the saved, Acts 2:47**

1. As one was obedient to the gospel of Christ, they were added to the Lords body.

2. One cannot be saved without being a part of the body of Christ

**II) The Local congregation**

**A) Christians at Jerusalem met together as described in Acts 2.42**

**Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

**1.** After the stoning of Stephen recorded in Acts 7 Christians were dispersed to other areas.

**Acts 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. 4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.**

2. We read of them coming together so as to worship and serve God in cities in certain areas. The seven churches of Asia, the churches of Galatia

3. Various passages points out to us the assembling of the Saints for different reasons, **Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

**1 Corinthians 16:1 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.**

**B) These congregations were comprised of Christians but they were autonomous which means independent of each other.**

1. There was no organization bigger than the local congregation. No “societies”, councils, conventions, etc

2. To change the organization of the local church whereas to oversee a region or numerous congregations. For such is foreign to the Bible.

**C) The organization of a congregation included, saints, elders, and deacons**

**Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:**

**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 14:23**

1. Their authority: oversight was limited to the local congregation and the teachings of Christ**. 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.**

**1 Peter 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;**

2. They were not able to teach a different doctrine as described in **Galatians 1.6-7**

3. Qualifications for elders given in two passages.

**1 Timothy 3:1 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..**

**Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you-- 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**

4. The role of deacons, servants of the church is also define in the Bible.

5. There was to be a plurality of elders and not a one man rule

**D) Each local congregation have their own work, often described in three terms**

**Ephesians 4:11 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,**

**1.** Evangelism – preaching the gospel to the lost, either by local teaching or sending out preachers to other areas to preach the gospel.

2. Edification -which means to build up the Saints. Paul Acts14 went back to congregations established earlier to teach more.

a. Paul’s instruction to Timothy was to teach men so that they will go out and teach others.

b. The church is a teaching organization.

3. Benevolence – to help the needy Saints.

**Acts 4:34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.**

**All of these were done in harmony with and restricted to the teachings of the apostles concerning Jesus.**

**Acts 11:28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.**

**E) The worship of the church consisted of prayer, singing, giving, teaching/preaching, and the Lord’s Supper.**

**Conclusion: Exodus 25:9 "According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it…**

**40 "And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.**

**Hebrews 8:5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."**