

**The Local Church
Selected Scripture
January 11, 2015**

Introduction

Last week, we looked at how Jesus is the head of the church. He built the church. He bought the church. He rules the church. He did it by sending the Holy Spirit. We also looked at how the Holy Spirit came that day on the Day of Pentecost and united the believers with power and unity. It is on that day that the Holy Spirit gave birth to the church. He has baptized the believers into one body.

Today, I want us to look at the local church: the church that local believers meet. As hinted before, the church is not a building or a place, but rather the church is the people. Worldwide all believers are part of the one Church (which we call the universal church) with Christ as the Head. If all believers are part of the Church, then what is the local church? How is it different from the universal church?

I. Definition of the Local Church

- Congregation of professing believers in Christ meeting regularly at a location under the oversight of the elders, observing the Lord's ordinances, and continuing the apostle's doctrine
- Professing believers in Christ
 - Profession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior

Matthew 16:16-18 *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

- Professing believers
 - Not all people in church are true believers, even though they profess knowledge of Christ
 - Wheat / Tares
- Oversight of the elders
 - Spiritual leaders appointed by the church

1 Timothy 5:17 *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

Note: People meeting together for Bible Study at home, college, or other places (ie. InterVarsity or Campus Crusade, or BSM) is not a church because there are no elders to lead the congregation.

- Observing the Lord's ordinances
 - Lord's Supper

Luke 22:17-20 *After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you."*

- Baptism

Matthew 28:19 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

- Continuing the apostle's doctrine
 - Doctrine = teaching

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.*

II. NT Practices of the Local Church

- The NT is scarce on information on church practices
- There are no rules or guidelines for how the church is to run
- **Acts 2:42-47**, we see a small picture of what the church did in the NT

Acts 2:42-47 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

- Who are 'They'
 - The 3000 that were saved from Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost
 - The church is made of believers, not unbelievers
- Devoted to Scriptural teaching of the apostles
 - This church was totally committed to the Word of God
 - They listened to the teachings every day
 - Note their attitude to the teaching: AWE!
- Devoted to the fellowship
 - Shared life
 - Necessary part of a believer's life
 - They met every day
 - They ate together in the homes
- Devoted to the Ordinances
 - Breaking of the bread = Lord's Supper
 - They were cross-centered
- Devoted to prayer
- Devoted to giving and helping those in need
 - They were willing to help each other in need
 - If they have something and another needs it—they gave it without question or fuss

III. Practical Applications for the Local Church

- Eager to learn doctrine
 - We are to be like the Bereans

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

- What do we look for in Scripture?

John 5:39 *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me,*

- Christ's work and victory
- They study the Scriptures daily—this should be the hallmark of every Christian
- When studying Scripture, you will get much from the preaching and teaching
- AND you will be able to spot error or false teaching
- Wanting to be in fellowship with believers
 - Notice the 1st church's attitude: fellowshiped with glad and sincere hearts
 - Attitude of love, joy, and unity
 - If you come to church regularly but do not fellowship with believers in church
 - Then you are NOT part of the church
 - You are going against the church, the fellowship
 - Every believer has to desire fellowship with other believers in the same local church
 - That fellowship should be as close as a family

1 John 2:11 *But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.*

1 John 2:10 *Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.*

- Equipping the members to do good works
 - The reason we are in church is to help each other to do good works

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

- Helping believers in need

Romans 15:26 *For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*

2 Corinthians 9:12 *This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.*