**The Membership and Structure of Christ’s Church**

(Universal – membership; Local – membership; Local structure – Ephesians 4)

1. The church – Universal

*The universal church refers to ALL Christians.*

1. Prophecies concerned the universal church.

* Isaiah 2:1-4
  + *“The mountain of the Lord’s house”* refers to His church.
  + *“All nations”* has reference to the church being composed of not only those of Jewish decent, but Gentiles as well.
  + This isn’t a prophecy concerning any local group of Christians but the overall collective group of Christians.

1. The universal church in NT.

* Christ is head, he makes the rules – Ephesians 1:22-23
* Acts 2:41, 47
  + The Lord does the adding. He only adds those who are saved. Those baptized are added. Ergo those who are saved, i.e. baptized, make up the church.
  + Church membership
    - 2:21 – call on the name of the Lord = saved.
    - Mark 16:16 – believe and baptized = saved.
    - Galatians 3:26-29 – Those baptized are baptized into Christ.
      * Talking to church in Galatia.
      * If it’s true for one then it’s true for the other.
      * *“the promise is to…all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”* (Acts 2:39).
    - Ephesians 1:22-23 – To be in Christ is to be in His body. His body is the church.
      * 4:4 – Christ only has one body. His one body refers to every soul that has been added to it via the *“one baptism”* (v. 5).
* Members of the church are called *“brethren”* (Hebrews 2:10-11).
* James 1:1-2
  + James was not writing to a local group of people.
  + It is apparent that he wrote his epistle to scattered Christians.
  + He called the scattered *“brethren”* (v. 2).
  + If there is a Christian (no matter who, when, or where) he is a member of the one church.

1. The church – Local

*The local church refers to a group of Christians in a specific location.*

* Part of scripture is instruction for individual Christian’s conduct with regard to the universal church.
* The other part is instruction on conduct with regard to the local church.
  + 1 Timothy 3:15 – Refers to the universal and local church. Context – v. 1-13 – qualifications of elders and deacons. – 4:1-5 – Great Apostasy not limited to a single local church.
    - Elders *“shepherd the flock of God which is among [them]”* (1 Peter 5:2). Autonomous – self-governing. Independent.
* Notice local churches.
  + Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2 (churches); Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1
  + Romans 16:16 – churches of Christ.
* Is there local church membership? Is it scriptural to either accept or deny a person to be numbered with the local church?
  + They have to be in fellowship with God – 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 John 1:5-7; 2 John 9-11 (writing to a local church – v. 12)
* How does a local church know whether or not to accept someone?
  + Acts 9:26-28 – They weren’t willing to accept Saul, but Barnabas vouched for his conversion.
  + 1 Timothy 1:18-20 – Paul let Timothy know about those from who he withdrew fellowship. Suffered shipwreck concerning the faith.
  + 2 Timothy 1:13-18 – Paul warned of Phygellus and Hermogenes, but commended Onesiphorus.
  + 2 Timothy 2:15-18 – Paul told Timothy about two who had strayed from the truth. Message will spread like cancer.
  + 2 Timothy 4:14-15 – Paul warned Timothy of Alexander the coppersmith. Did him much harm.
  + Titus 3:10-11 – Paul said to reject divisive people.
* Romans 16:17-18 – Paul told the church in Rome to be aware of the divisive brethren. He said to avoid them. This can only happen if we know who they are.
* The ultimate way to ensure you don’t accept someone you shouldn’t is to ask questions. This may include letters from recent congregations. (cf. Philippians 2:19-24; Romans 16:1-2).

1. The church – Local Structure

*To ensure the local church accepts the correct individuals, accepts the correct doctrine, functions in an authorized manner, and grows spiritually, Christ gave some to be… (Ephesians 4:11-16)*

1. Apostles

* Apostle – *apostolos* – a delegate; ambassador; one sent forth with orders.
  + Commissioned by Christ – Matthew 28:18-20
* Requirements
  + (1) Accompanied Jesus during His ministry. (2) Witnessed the resurrected Christ. – Acts 1:21-22
  + Paul exception to being seen with Christ, *“born out of due time”* – 1 Corinthians 15:8
* Witnesses of Christ with divine power – Acts 1:8 (READ)
* Inspired by HS to know the mind of Christ – 1 Corinthians 2:13-16(READ)
  + In this way they are still within the structure of the church.

1. Prophets

* Prophet – *prophētēs* – foreteller; inspired speaker; a mouthpiece for God.
  + Moses/Aaron – Exodus 4:15-17; 7:1
  + Jeremiah – Jeremiah 1:4-9
  + Inspired – 2 Peter 1:19-21 (READ)
* Prophets told of future events that would happen after the peoples time. They confirmed it with the foretelling of events that would take place within their time.
* Prophets in NT spoke edification – 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 (READ)
  + God’s revelation was available in segments.
  + When the revelation was complete prophecy ceased – 1 Corinthians 13:9-10

1. Evangelists

* Evangelist – *euaggelistēs* – a preacher of the gospel; bringer of good news/glad tidings.
* The world has a different view on evangelists. Responsibilities are given that are not authorized by scripture. It is important to abide by the scriptures work description of an evangelist.
* An evangelist preaches the gospel – 2 Timothy 4:1-5 (READ)*“do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”*
  + In simplicity – 2 Corinthians 11:3-4
  + In clarity – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
  + According to the pattern – 2 Timothy 1:13-14(READ) (HS dwell through word – 1 Timothy 4:13).
  + With sincere love – Philippians 1:15-18
  + To please God – Galatians 1:10

1. Pastors

* Pastor – *poimēn* – a shepherd.
  + Note: Different from an evangelist/preacher.
* Shepherd the flock (church)
  + 1 Peter 5:1-4 (READ); Acts 20:28
  + Command for every church to appoint elders – Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; only if there are qualified men – 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9
* The elders task includes…
  + Serve – “a good work” 1 Timothy 3:1 (READ); Spiritually – 3:5
    - Give tasks for deacons to perform.
  + Lead by example – Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3
  + Lead by God’s word – 1 Timothy 3:2, 6 *“able to teach…not a novice”*

1. Teachers

* Teachers include all of the above. But there can be, and are teachers who are not any of the above.
* Teachers are important – Romans 10:17 – faith requires knowledge of God’s word.; Paul stressed the importance of teachers – 2 Timothy 2:2 (READ)
* Teachers must be willing to learn and diligent in study – Hebrews 5:12-14
* Teaching is a serious task – James 3:1 (READ); They must practice what they teach – 1 Timothy 4:16