**Identifying the One Church (6) – Organization**

**Introduction**

1. God is not the author of confusion, rather, He demands order **(cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).**
2. Moses was given a pattern to follow in the construction of the copy and shadow **(cf. Hebrews 8:5)**, and we are supposed to follow the pattern for the church **(cf. 1 Timothy 3:15; *“Hold fast the pattern of sound words” 2 Timothy 1:13*)**.
3. Denominations have various “councils,” “conferences,” “general assemblies,” etc., along with the “pastoral system.” The Catholic Church has its Hierarchy, on top of which sits the Pope. Are these patterns of organization scriptural?
4. **How is the one church of the NT organized?**
5. Monarchical
6. The King
   1. **Hebrews 1:8-9** (*Jesus in contrast to angels – God speaks through His Son*) – Called God, by God, and given a kingdom.
      1. **Scepter** – symbol of personal authority – the one who holds the scepter holds the authority.
      2. **(v. 9)** – Supreme in righteousness, and resolve to uphold righteousness – ***“more than Your companions”*** – more than any other who held a kingly office.
   2. **Matthew 28:18** – Possesses all authority.
   3. **Ephesians 1:22-23** – The body is subservient to Him, the Head.
   4. ***“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11)***.
7. Delegates – Apostles and Prophets
   1. **Ephesians 2:19-22** – The household of God, which is the church of God, is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.
      1. **(v. 20)** – The whole foundation is directed by the ***“cornerstone”*** – standard by which all other elements of the building are measured.
      2. **(vv. 21-22)** – It is still ***“in the Lord”*** that the church is built, and dwells.
      3. The apostles and prophets are not a separate authority from Christ, but Christ speaking through them as inspired delegates – **church is a dwelling place of God *“in the Spirit”* 🡪**
   2. **Ephesians 3:1-5** – God made known the mystery by revelation, by the Spirit through the Holy apostles and prophets.
   3. **These are not men deciding how the church will function, and what doctrines she will believe and teach.**
   4. **These are INSPIRED MEN, through whom Christ is speaking.**
8. *The church is a MONARCHY, and the King has ALL AUTHORITY. This is continually the foundation of the church’s organization. 🡪*
9. Autonomous – Local Church
10. Autonomy – self-governing.
    1. **1 Peter 5:2a** – The church universal exists, but other than the foundation, the church is organized on a local level.
       1. **All congregations are subject to the Head/King, and have the same standard to abide by.**
       2. However, each congregation functions independently of each other as they function under the authority of Christ.
    2. Example of autonomy in the seven churches of Asia (**cf. Revelation 2-3**):
       1. **Revelation 1:20-2:1** – Seven stars (angels of the churches) in right hand (protection, authority, direction), seven lampstands (churches) Jesus in their midst (knows their works, keeps them accountable).
       2. **Autonomy at work:**
          1. **2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14** – Separate churches, all in Asia.
             1. No “Convention of Asian Churches.”
             2. All autonomous in their governing, but answer to the same Head.
          2. **Different works:** 
             1. **Rebuked** – *Ephesus* (**2:4** – Left first love); *Pergamos* (**2:14-15** – Compromise with false teachers); *Thyatira* (**2:20** – Corrupt, immorality); *Sardis* **(3:1** – dead, works imperfect); *Laodicea* (**3:15-16** – Lukewarm, not zealous).
             2. **Encouraged to remain faithful** – *Smyrna* **(2:9-10** – Persecuted – you are rich); *Philadelphia* **(3:8** – Faithful – have kept My word – continue to keep it).
          3. **Wisdom of autonomous design by God:**
             1. **The unfaithful churches, being independent from the others, did not cause WHOLESALE APOSTASY.**
             2. **2:5** – The removal of the lampstand from one church does not affect the next, but is a local judgment.
11. Established Law Enforced (**cf. Acts 15** – not changed; no arbitrary decisions on doctrine and associated practice).
    1. **Acts 15:1-2** – Judaizing teachers binding Law of Moses on Gentile Christians in Antioch. Paul went to discuss ***“this question.”***
       1. ***Was this a combination of congregations in a “convention” or with a “board of directors?”***
       2. NO – **cf. Galatians 2:1-2** (By revelation – commanded by God); **Ephesians 2:14-18** (Gospel truth already established).
       3. **Paul, commanded by God to enforce the gospel truth, was sent to Jerusalem to defend the truth already established on the matter. (Paul was an apostle, part of the foundation).**
    2. **Truth already established was defended and obeyed (no arbitrary decision, or popular vote):**
       1. **(vv. 7-9)** – Peter, and the reception of HS by Gentiles. (God’s teaching.)
       2. **(v. 12)** – Paul and Barnabas, and miracles worked among Gentiles. (God bearing witness.)
       3. **(vv. 13-18)** – James, and appeal to the teaching of Scripture. (God’s law.)
       4. Conclusion from the inspired revelation of God **(vv. 19-20** – then they wrote a letter to send to churches).
       5. **16:4-5** – The letter consisted of the teachings of the HS – **THE WORD OF GOD, not the decree of some council of men, or democratic decision.**
12. *Each congregation functions independently, but all are subject to Christ. There is not change of doctrine or practice. Those who do such are estranged from Christ.*
13. The Local Church
    1. Elders
       1. **Acts 14:23** – appointed elders in every church. (PLURAL)
       2. **Titus 1:5** – set in order things lacking – appoint elders. (PLURAL) (NOT ONE elder, or pastor, to a church).
       3. **Acts 20:28** – Paul to Ephesian elders.
          1. ***“overseers”*** (NKJV); ***“bishops”*** (ASV) – a superintendent (Strong). (***Ephesians 4:11 – “pastors”***)
          2. **(vv. 29-32)** – Spiritual work, enforcing God’s word.
          3. **Cf. Titus 1:10-14** – realm of authority, and superintendence does not go beyond the enforcing of God’s established word.
       4. **1 Peter 5:1-2** – Shepherds – ***“shepherd”*** – feed – spiritual feeding.
          1. ***NOTE: “the flock of God WHICH IS AMONG YOU”***
          2. Not one bishop to many churches.
       5. **MUST BE QUALIFIED** – **cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**
       6. **Acts 11:29-30** – Collection for the needy saints placed under their authority to disperse.
          1. This is another work of authority they are given.
          2. However, this is NOT their primary work. (Primary is spiritual.)
          3. **Other things of a more physical nature fall to the deacons 🡪**
    2. Deacons
       1. **Philippians 1:1** – Deacons also in churches, under the authority of the elders.
          1. *diakonos*; an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter.
          2. “one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant, minister” (Strong).
       2. **Acts 6:1-4** – Men appointed to serve in the capacity of serving tables.
          1. Apostles’ work – spiritual **(v. 2, 4).**
          2. Elders’ work – spiritual – deacons give attention to serving tables, where elders focus on feeding the flock spiritually.
       3. MUST BE QUALIFIED – **cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-13**
    3. Members
       1. Members must be submissive to the eldership – **cf. Hebrews 13:17**
       2. However, they must first be submissive to the Head, who is Christ. The elders are not to go beyond the word, and the members are not to be contrary to Christ.

**Conclusion** – God has established a specific organization of His church. All others organized in a different way are not churches which belong to the Lord.