

Introduction

- 1) The Scriptures:
 - a) The finality of the scriptures:
 - i) The repeated expression: “As it is written” signifying “It stands written” (Josh. 8:31; 1 Kgs. 2:3; Rom. 1:17; 1 Cor. 1:31)
 - b) The sufficiency of the scriptures:
 - i) “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - ii) “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” (Psa. 19:7-11)
 - iii) “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)
 - c) The fidelity of the scriptures:
 - i) “The scripture of truth” (Dan. 10:21)
 - ii) “Which he promised” (Acts 26:6; Rom. 1:2; Titus 1:2)
 - iii) “God is true” (Jn. 3:33; 2 Cor. 1:18)
 - iv) “Christ is the truth” (Jn. 14:6)
 - v) The “Spirit is truth” (Jn. 16:13; 1 Jn. 5:6)
- 2) All the teachings and practices of the local church must have their foundation in the scriptures and what is not of them is error. A local assembly is the evidence of obedience to the scriptures, but it will only be in fellowship with God and the scriptures insofar as they are obeyed.

The Purposes of God For a Local Church

- 1) To show His glory (Eph. 3:21; Rev. 1:6)

How Is This Purpose To Be Accomplished?

- 1) By those who are sanctified. (1 Cor. 1:2)
- 2) By the showing of His grace eternally by the redeemed. (Eph. 2:7-9)
- 3) By the redeemed individuals being conformed to the image of Christ. (Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 2:14-15; 3:18; Gal. 4:19)
- 4) By the redeemed doing all for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)
- 5) By the witness of the gospel and teaching apostolic doctrine. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:42)
- 6) By fulfilling priestly functions. (Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5)

- 7) By having a local assembly governed by men who have the qualifications. As in any work the individual must have the qualifications, and if a man does not have these, then irrespective of what he or others think, he ought not to be an elder. Those qualifications are:
 - a) Divine sovereignty (Acts 20:28)
 - b) Personal exercise (1 Tim. 3:1) Note the wording: “if any man desire overseer-ship”. Timothy was such a man. (2 Cor. 8:16)
 - c) This must be preceded by:
 - i) Having good report of those not in the assembly (1 Tim. 3:7)
 - ii) Assembly recognition (1 Thess. 5:12), not being announced and then starting to function. That ought to have been his characteristic before hand. The saints will know them, not by an announcement or ceremony, but by their activities.
 - iii) His knowing the saints. (Jn. 10:3; 1 Thess 5:14-15)
 - iv) A willing mind. (1 Pet. 5:2)
- 8) By the using of gifted individuals for the mutual development of the saints. (1 Pet. 4:10)
- 9) By individuals knowing their own gift and using it, not belittling it or thinking themselves superior. Paul uses the human body to prove that all the members are needed. (1 Cor. 12:21)
- 10) By love and unity. (Jn. 13:34; 17:21)
- 11) Ideally they are gathered:
 - a) Unto Shiloh, the scepter - the Lordship of Christ (Gen. 49:10)
 - b) Unto God, the covenant by sacrifice, ownership. (Psa. 50:5)
 - c) Unto His Name, the Lord’s presence, Headship. (Matt. 18:20)

The Prerequisites For His Presence

- 1) There is a danger in thinking that irrespective of our state or disobedience to the scriptures, we can just claim the promise of the Lord, and He must be there with us. God is never under obligation to do anything. Certain qualifications must be met for His presence.
- 2) The context of Matt. 18:20 must be read, and indicates:
 - a) A people marked by humility (Matt. 18:4)
 - b) Right priorities (Matt. 18:8-9)
 - c) Gracious consideration toward others (Matt. 18:10)
 - d) Having a forgiving spirit (Matt. 18:21-22)

The Expectations Anticipated Because of His Presence

- 1) Reverence for: “Holy and reverend is His name” (Psa. 111:9)
- 2) Order according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 14:33, 40; Col. 2:5)
- 3) Holiness (1 Pet. 1:15-16)
- 4) Unity (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; in prayer (Rom. 15:30); Mind and judgment (1 Cor. 1:10); Gospel (Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 1:8)

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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