

The Church v2

Lesson 12
Institutionalism

The Church v2

1. What is the church?
2. The nature of the universal church
3. The nature of a local church
4. Unreliable sources of religious authority
5. The only source of Divine authority today
6. How to establish Divine authority
7. Things that are expedient

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The Church v2

8. Respecting the silence of the Scriptures
9. The organization of a local church
10. The work of a local church
11. Independence autonomy and cooperation of local churches
12. Institutionalism
13. The social gospel
14. The unity of the church

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Independence Autonomy And Cooperation of Local Churches

1. Local churches must be independent and autonomous
2. Independence safeguards A local church from error
3. Is Acts 15 proof of centralization?
4. Defining unauthorized and authorized cooperation
5. Examples of unauthorized and authorized cooperation

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Introduction

- Among churches of Christ, institutionalism is a common error that has perverted both local church organization and work
- Denominations have long before taught and practiced this error
- Institutionalism is not widely understood and is also hard to detect and abandon because it appeals to human wisdom and multiplied good results

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Introduction

- Sadly, even among the minority of churches of Christ that historically have openly opposed this error, there is now a hesitation to teach against it
- Although they provide no direct financial support to “religious” institutions, many local churches have shown dependence on them to train their preachers and provide their teaching materials

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Introduction

- The local church has been sufficiently designed by God to do the work He has given it do without any need of institutions
- God does not need our human wisdom to make the church work “better”
- Institutions are not needed to unify the church
- Defining and defending against this error will help us abide only in the apostles’ teaching concerning a local church

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What is institutionalism?

- No formal definition but my best description
- The belief that the universal church is a religious organization composed of local churches that combine together to accomplish their collective spiritual/social work aided by social institutions that they depend on and/or fund
- This error can be believed and practiced completely or partially

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Corrupt Leaders Corrupt Local Church Organization

Act 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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.

Act 20:29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

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Corrupt Leaders Corrupt Local Church Organization

Act 20:30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Act 20:31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

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Corrupt Leaders Corrupt Local Church Organization

Act 20:32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

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Corrupt Leaders Corrupt Local Church Organization

1Pe 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

1Pe 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

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Errors of Corrupt Teachers Readily
Accepted By Corrupt Local Churches

2Ti 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2Ti 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

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Errors of Corrupt Teachers Readily
Accepted By Corrupt Local Churches

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

2Ti 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

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Errors of Corrupt Teachers Readily
Accepted By Corrupt Local Churches

2Ti 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

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Errors of Corrupt Teachers Readily
Accepted By Corrupt Local Churches

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Act 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

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Desire of Many Local Churches
To Be Like Denominations

1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;

1Sa 8:5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."

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Desire of Many Local Churches
To Be Like Denominations

1Sa 8:6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.

1Sa 8:7 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them."

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Desire of Many Local Churches To Be Like Denominations

1Co 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

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How Does Institutionalism Spread Through Local Churches?

1. Corrupt leaders corrupt local church organization
2. Errors of corrupt teachers readily accepted by corrupt local churches
3. Desire of many local churches to be like denominations

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Examples of Institutionalism

- Believing the universal church is an organization of local churches leads to the idea of centralized work
- If local churches are to work together as “one” universal church, then there must be centralized oversight and treasury
- The two primary ways churches of Christ centralize their work are through social institutions and sponsoring churches

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Examples of Institutionalism

- Social institutions are third-party organizations funded by local churches and individuals to oversee and do work in evangelism, benevolence and edification
- Examples would include “Bible” colleges and benevolent organizations
- Sponsoring churches are “local” churches that assume oversight and control over a project that is funded by other local churches

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American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) in 1849

- Led by Alexander Campbell to create an organization funded by local churches to decide who and where the gospel should be preached in the United States
- But, local churches are to decide for themselves who they will support in preaching and send the funds directly to that preacher

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Local Churches Sent Support Directly To Preachers Working With Them

1Co 9:13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?

1Co 9:14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

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Local Churches Sent Support Directly To Preachers Working In Other Areas

2Co 11:8 I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you;

2Co 11:9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

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Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc., Nashville, TN

- Provides needed supplies to both Christians and non-Christians who have suffered from natural disasters
- Funded by both local churches and individuals
- It is wrong because local churches are restricted to provide funds to needy saints (not the world) first among them
- Then, they can send directly to the local churches where saints are in need

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Local Churches To Help Own Needy Saints First and Then Other Local Churches

1Ti 5:16 If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

Act 2:44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

Act 2:45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

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Local Churches To Help Own Needy Saints First and Then Other Local Churches

Rom 15:25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

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As They Are Able Individual Christians Must Help Those In The World Who Are Needy

Gal 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Gal 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

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Institutionalism

1. What is institutionalism?
2. How does institutionalism spread through local churches?
3. Examples of institutionalism

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Sponsoring Church Overseeing India Missions Program

- India Missions program overseen by elders of Central church of Christ, Cleburne, TX
- Purpose to evangelize India
- Funded by many local churches
- Decisions made by elders of Central church on what preachers are supported, where they preach and so on

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Local Churches Sent Support Directly To Preachers Working In Other Areas

2Co 11:8 I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you;
2Co 11:9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

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Local Churches Are To Oversee Their Own Work of Supporting Preachers

1Pe 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

1Pe 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

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Sponsoring Church Overseeing Tsunami Relief Benevolent Effort

- Tsunami Relief benevolent effort overseen by elders of Central church of Christ, Cleburne, TX
- Local churches send money to sponsoring church
- Sponsoring church distributes money to needy local churches and the world

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Local Churches Sent Funds Directly To Needy Saints In Local Churches

Rom 15:25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

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Local Churches Can Receive Money Only For Needy Saints Among Them

Act 24:17 "Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;

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Errors of Institutionalism

1. The universal church is a working organization composed of local churches
2. The universal church's mission is both spiritual and social to Christians and the world
3. Social institutions and sponsoring churches necessary for the universal church's mission

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Jesus' Universal Church Is The Assembly of Individuals In The World That He Saves

Act 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

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Jesus' Universal Church Is The Assembly of Individuals In The World That He Saves

Act 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Act 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

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Jesus' Universal Church Is The Assembly of Individuals In The World That He Saves

Act 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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Jesus' Universal Church Is The Assembly of Individuals In The World That He Saves

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

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Jesus' Universal Church Is The Assembly of Individuals In The World That He Saves

Rom 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Rom 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

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Jesus' Universal Church Is The Assembly of
Individuals In The World That He Saves

Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

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Each Local Church Restricted In Social
Activities And Benevolence To The Lost

1Co 11:33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

1Co 11:34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

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Each Local Church Restricted In Social
Activities And Benevolence To The Lost

1Ti 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1Ti 5:16 If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

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Each Local Church Restricted In Social
Activities And Benevolence To The Lost

Jas 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

Jas 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

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Each Local Church Is To Oversee,
Fund And Do Its Own Work

Act 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

1Pe 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

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Each Local Church Is To Oversee,
Fund And Do Its Own Work

1Co 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.

1Co 16:2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

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Each Local Church Is To Oversee, Fund And Do Its Own Work

1Co 16:3 When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

1Co 16:4 and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

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Local Churches Can Only Send Funds To Local Churches With Needy Saints

Act 24:17 "Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;

2Co 8:11 But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

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Local Churches Can Only Send Funds To Local Churches With Needy Saints

2Co 8:12 For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

2Co 8:13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality--

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Local Churches Can Only Send Funds To Local Churches With Needy Saints

2Co 8:14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality;

2Co 8:15 as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK."

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Bible Truths That Refute Institutionalism

1. Jesus' universal church is the assembly of individuals in the world that he saves
2. Each local church restricted in social activities and benevolence to the lost
3. Each local church is to oversee, fund and do its own work
4. Local churches can only send funds to local churches with needy saints

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip Local Churches To Do Their Work

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2Ti 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip Local Churches To Do Their Work

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip Local Churches To Do Their Work

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip Local Churches To Do Their Work

Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

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Institutionalism

1. What is institutionalism?
2. How does institutionalism spread through local churches?
3. Examples of institutionalism
4. Errors of institutionalism
5. Bible truths that refute institutionalism
6. The Scriptures are sufficient to equip local churches to do their work

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