

**Scripture:** Romans 12

CoF 28 (3)

**Singing:** 227:1-3 – 132:1-5 – 125:1, 2, 4 – 451:1, 2

### **The local New Testament Churches**

I. What they are II. What they are to be like

#### **I. What are the 'local NT churches' according to God's Word?**

A. Not a *religious club* but a *portion of Jesus' spiritual kingdom* (Acts 28:18)

1. As Jesus delegated part of His authority to the national state (Rom. 13)

2. so Jesus delegated part of His authority to the local church (Matt. 18:17-18)

B. We need to recapture God's definition of the local church

1. One of Jesus' descriptions the NT Church is 1 Peter 2:9

a. Local NT Church is *His local agent or embassy* of His spiritual Kingdom

b. Therefore we don't *join a* but *submit to* the local church (CoF 28)

3. Those that belong to a local church are *citizens of the Kingdom* (Eph. 2:29)

a. they exist to *represent* Jesus Christ's spiritual character and authority

C. The Lord's teaching on the local church has to *distinct emphasis*

1. While on earth, Jesus majored on the 'Kingdom emphasis'

2. After His ascension, Jesus expanded the 'Church emphasis'

3. How do these two 'fit' together in one: *as the wineglass and the wine*

a. the 'glory of the embassy' is not in the structures but in the staff

#### **II. What are the local churches to be like according to God's Word?**

A. Each local church needs to be a *holy* embassy of Jesus' Kingdom

1. 'Holy' means Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15

a. Not like the failure of His first Kingdom people (Deut. 4:6-8)

b. But like His heart-renewed people (1 Peter 2:9; Matt. 5-7)

3. Therefore each local church is given authority to guard & grow its citizens

B. Each local church is be all the living 'metaphors' the Holy Spirit gives

1. Each metaphor is a different aspect of Christ's crown: His people

2. Jesus directs that His local Kingdom outposts act out each picture

3. Each metaphor is loaded with implications about *how we are to live*

- a. **Family** highlights our relationships – shared identity
- b. **Body** highlights we are mutually dependent but have different roles
- c. **Temple** of Spirit highlights that God Himself dwells within us
- d. **Living stones build on foundation** highlights place of security, refuge
- e. **Vine/fruit-bearing branches** pictures union with Christ and others
- f. **Bride** pictures our exclusive devotion to delight our Husband
- g. **nation** shows all citizens have different positions/tasks

**Reflect:** Are we a healthy, Spirit-filled, Christ-reflecting local embassy of Jesus?