

The Covenantal Life: Being the Church
Week 2 - The Local Church as a Covenant Body
Revelation 2:1-7

- Jesus has a direct, personal relationship with each individual local church
 - He is Sovereign over every church, has power to establish, remove them
 - Each local church is its own sphere of authority directly under Christ

*“To **each** of these churches thus gathered, according to the Lord’s mind as declared in His Word, He has given **all the power and authority** which is in any way required for them to carry on the order of worship and discipline which He has instituted for them to observe. He has also given all the commands and rules for the due and right exercise of this power” (LBCF 26.7).*

- Authority is vested on the local level
- Christ serves as covenant Witness to local church covenants (Rev. 2-3, cf Mal. 2:14-16)
 - New Covenant is a divine covenant in which Christ serves as federal Head and Mediator for His people, and the Father promises to save all those under Christ’s headship
 - Local church covenant is *related* to New Covenant, but not *identical* (visible vs. invisible)
 - Even unbelievers can be bound covenantally to local churches and are obligated to live up to the terms of the covenant
 - Unlike the NC, the local church covenant can be broken - people who sinfully leave a church can still be Christians, and unbelievers can become members of the local church
 - Like marriage, the local church is established by God, operates directly under His authority, yet God is not a covenant partner - He ordains and oversees
- The local church: A community bound together by covenant to worship and serve the living God with one another, where the word, sacraments, and discipline are rightly administered by qualified men
 - Binding obligations exist within the local church
 - 1 Thess. 5:12-22 - commands given to the local church as the local church
 - Consequences are attached to disregarding these commands - they are binding (2 Thess. 3:10-15)
 - Local church is spoken of as an organic unity - one body
 - Eph. 4:1-6, 15-16, 25 - members of the church belong to one another
 - Analogous to one flesh reality of marriage (Eph. 5:2, 21, 22, 25)

- Commanded to use our gifts for others in the local church (Rom. 12:4-7, 1 Pet. 4:8-11)
- Commanded to give materially to those in the local church (Gal. 6:6-10)
- 1 Corinthians deals with division in the church, and Paul emphasizes the unity of the local body and the obligations arising from that (1 Cor. 10:17, 12:4-11, 27-28, 14:1-4, 12, 19, 22)
- Others in the church have a rightful claim on us
- Local church involves federal headship
 - Heb. 13:17 - mutual obligation between leaders and those under them
 - Leaders, as heads, will answer for those under their authority
 - “Obey and submit” command mirrors wives obligation to their covenant heads
 - Jas. 3:1 - teachers are responsible for those under their instruction
 - 1 Pet. 5:1-4 - local elders represent Christ, the chief Shepherd
 - 1 Cor. 9:14, Gal. 6:6-7, 1 Tim. 5:17-18 - members must support leaders financially as much as possible
 - 1 Tim. 5:19-22 - Must hold elders accountable to God’s word and standards
- Local church obligations are divinely enforced
 - Matt. 18:17-19 - church executes God’s judgments in His name
 - 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 11:27-30 - God exercises judgment against covenant breakers
 - Titus 3:10-11 - those who divide the body are under judgment
 - Heb. 6:4-8 - false participants in the local church covenant are promised particular punishment from God, the covenant Witness
- Covenant signs are practiced in the local church
 - Universal practices of baptism and communion are entrusted to local church elders, are only administered in that context
 - Signify union with Christ and the invisible church as well as union with the particular covenant body of believers sharing in the sacraments (1 Cor. 10:17, 11:17-22)