**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-stIAJMnpL0>**

**Theology of Congregationalism**

* Different institutions God has set up
  + State: has the power of the sword
  + Families: parents have the power of rod
  + Bible:
  + Church: as protestants, we see the church as being a voluntary society (not like the Catholics who give the church authority)
    - Leads to consumeristic questions – we treat Church like a club
    - Church discipline is no way to ‘win customers’
    - As a pastor, the job is to win more customers

But what does the bible say Church is?

1. The question at stake in Matthew’s gospel is: **who represents heaven on Earth?**
   * The kingdom of heaven is where God rules, Earth is where Sin rules
   * 3:2 – heaven is coming, be ready!
   * 5:3 – who the beneficiaries are
   * 5:16 – how the beneficiaries live
   * 6:10 – how the beneficiaries pray
   * 6:19 – what the beneficiaries strive for
   * 13:11 – these people love the kingdom of heaven
   * 24:30 – not everyone will love it
   * 28:18 – (Jesus is the son of man)
   * Heaven and Earth coming together again, being returned to how it was in Eden
     + Regime Change: ethnic Israel to … who?
   * 3:9, 8:11 – Israel and its leaders are going to be shut out
   * 23:13 – because they have shut the door to others
2. Jesus represents Heaven
   * 3:17 – Heaven affirming Jesus as God’s son
   * 11:27 – Jesus represents heaven…along with anyone he reveals God to
3. The Local Church Represents Heaven
   * 16:13 - Jesus is interested in a what and a who
     + What: a right confession
     + Who: a right confessor
   * 16:18 - Jesus gives Peter the authority he just exercised - the authority to stand on Earth and make declarations on behalf of heaven concerning the what and who
     + He gives Peter these keys for binding and loosing
       - Based on rabbinic authority: interpret the what (of the law), and the who (of applying the law)
       - Giving Peter and the apostles the authority to give that declaration
       - Like a judge who does not make the law or make a person innocent or guilty – they just understand the law and apply it to individuals
   * 18:17-20 – The ability of the local church to exercise the power of the keys
     + The church is able to declare before the nations who is in the kingdom of heaven
       - Not the authority to make Christians, but to formally declare Christians before the nations of the Earth
       - The Church is an embassy of the kingdom of God, representing a nation across eschatological time as it declares on the what and the who of the gospel
   * The Church does this through the ordinances
4. We don’t join churches, we submit to churches
   * Thinking biblically, what is the relationship to the church: submission
   * Individuals do not have the authority to declare themselves Christian to the nations
     + Acts 2:41
   * Membership is a declaration of citizenship in God’s kingdom
   * “Church membership is a relation between the church and a Christian, in which the church affirms and oversees a Christian’s profession of faith and discipleship, and a Christian submits to that church’s affirmation and oversight”
     + Asymmetrical relationship: affirming and overseeing vs. submitting
     + Done through the wordless oaths of baptism and the lord’s supper
   * All Christians share in a fellowship of love, faith etc. but members of the same local church share in an accountability fellowship, a discipline fellowship
     + Local church is able to affirm and oversee the profession of faith – inseparable from the relationships
     + Practically living close to members of local church to support each other’s declarations of faith
     + Acts 2:43- - We submit our entire lives to the local church, submission and relationships inseparable
5. Church membership is an office, it is a job
   * Helping to preserve the gospel
     + Paul astonishment with the Galatians – the members of the Galatian church are not doing their job of guarding the *what* of the gospel
   * Affirming gospel citizens
     + Telling new members of the church that God has delegated them to join in making declarations about who the citizens of heaven are
     + 1 Cor 5:4-5 – the circumstances for making a declaration that somebody is not a citizen of the kingdom of heaven
       - When you are assembled
       - …in the name of Jesus (Matt 18)
       - …the spirit is present
       - …with the Power of the Lord Jesus
   * Disciple other church members
   * Evangelise non-Christians
6. We must take great care to keep the line between church and world clear
   * 2 Cor 6:12-18 -
7. Church membership is for repentant and baptised sinners
   * 5:3, 7:21, 10:32, 18:4 – the church is to receive:
     + The poor in spirit
     + Those who repent and do the father’s will
     + Those who acknowledge Christ
     + Those who humble themselves like little children
   * Christianity (and therefore Church membership) is for those who have tried and failed, and feel sick about it
   * Christianity (and therefore Church membership) is not for the morally perfect, but for the morally broken.
   * 9:12
   * 5:6