

## Scriptures and Doctrine :: the word: Church (Gr. EKKLESIA)

**the word: Church (Gr. EKKLESIA) - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2003/8/14 15:28**

Church (Greek Ekklesia)

This Is Appendix 186 From The Companion Bible.

1. The Greek word ekklesia means assembly, or a gathering of called-out ones. It is used seventy times in the Septuagint for the Hebrew kahal (from which latter we have our word call), rendered in Septuagint by sunagoge and ekklesia. This latter word occurs in New Testament 115 times (36 in plural), and is always translated "church" except in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 (assembly).
2. kahal is used (1) of Israel as a People called out from the rest of the nations (Genesis 28:3); (2) of the tribal council of Simeon and Levi, those called out from each tribe (Genesis 49:6); (3) of an assembly of Israelites called out for worship or any other purpose (Deuteronomy 18:16; 31:30. Joshua 8:35. Judges 21:8); (4) any assembly of worshippers as a congregation (Psalm 22:22, 25. Ekklesia in Matthew 16:18; (18:17. 1 Corinthians 14:19, 35, etc.); (5) the equivalent ekklesia of separate assemblies in different localities (Acts 5:11; 8:3. 1 Corinthians 4:17, etc.); (6) of the guild or "union" of Ephesian craftsmen (Acts 19:32, 41), and verse 39 (the lawful assembly). Finally, the special Pauline usage of ekklesia differs from all these. Other assemblies consisted of called-out ones from Jews, or from Gentiles (Acts 18:22), but this new body is of called-out ones from both.
3. Our word "church" has an equally varied usage. It is used (1) of any congregation; (2) of a particular church (England, or Rome, etc); (3) of the ministry of a church; (4) of the building in which the congregation assembles; (5) of Church as distinct from Chapel; (6) of the church as distinct from the world, and lastly, it is used in the Pauline sense, of the body of Christ.
4. It is of profound importance to distinguish the usage of the word in each case, else we may be reading "the church which was in the wilderness" into the Prison Epistles, although we are expressly told that there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the "church which is His body". And when our Lord said "On this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), those who heard His words could not connect them with the "mystery" which was "hid in God" and had not then been made known to the sons of men. Confusion follows our reading what refers to Israel in the past or the future into the present dispensation. Readers are referred to the various notes in the connexions.
5. The word where qualified by other terms occurs thus: -
 

Church of God; Acts 20:28. 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16 (plural), 22; 15:9. 2 Corinthians 1:1. Galatians 1:13. 1 Thessalonians 2:14 (plural). 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (plural). 1 Timothy 3:5, 15 (c. of the living God).

Churches of Christ; Romans 16:16.

Church in .. house; Romans 16:5. 1 Corinthians 16:19. Colossians 4:15. Philemon 2.

Churches of the Gentiles; Romans 16:4.

Churches of Galatia; 1 Corinthians 16:1. Galatians 1:2. Of Asia; 1 Corinthians 16:19. Of Macedonia; 2 Corinthians 8:1. Of Judaea; Galatians 1:22. Of the Laodiceans; Colossians 4:16. Of the Thessalonians; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

Church of the firstborn (plural); Hebrews 12:23.

Church in Ephesus, Smyrna, etc. Revelation 2 and 3; and

Churches; Revelation 22:16.

### NOTES

1 kahal occurs in the Old Testament 123 times; congregation eighty-six, assembly seventeen, company seventeen, an

d multitude three times. The Septuagint uses sunagoge and ekklesia as practically synonymous terms. But the sunagoge concerns the bringing together of the members of an existing society or body excluding all others, whereas the ekklesia calls and invites all men, including outsiders everywhere, to join it. Sunagoge being permanently associated with Jewish worship, was dropped by the early Christians in favor of ekklesia as of wider import.

2 Is derived from the Greek kuriakos, of or belonging to the Lord, house (Greek oikos) being understood. It comes to us through Anglo-Saxon circe (Scottish kirk).

**Re: the word: Church (Gr. EKKLESIA) - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/15 3:31**

This is good stuff. Bible words don't have definitions, they have histories. The concept of 'ekklesia' already had a long history when Christ first used it in Matt 16. The statement that must have taken their breath away was that Christ 'will build' (future tense) 'my church' (clear distinction from any 'ekklesia' that they were already familiar with.) This new entity could only be built upon the revelation that He was 'the Christ; the Son of the Living God' and at the time of His speaking was as future.

So is there one church or more? Does the 'ekklesia of Israel' (KJV congregation of Israel) still exist or has it now passed away? Should we move this thread to 'Scriptural Debates'?

Tyndale's NT of 1534 translated 'ekklesia' as congregation; he reserved the use of the word 'church' to describe heathen temples in Acts!) Sadly the KJV translators refused his better translation for the comfort of something more favourably acceptable to the reigning 'ecclesiastic' authorities. They are several other words where the KJV reverted to inferior words; want a list?

Look forward to hearing folks' views.

**Re: - posted by almondBranch (), on: 2003/11/20 5:50**

I know that ekklesia comes from the greek for "called out", based on this fact some have translated it simply as "called out ones". This is probably better than "church" but still doesn't tell the whole story. the english word "window" comes from "wind eye". But obviously translating it as "wind eye" would not be very helpfull.

Tyndale gives "congregation" some literal translations give "assembly". These are probably the best words to use, but still I can't help but feel that they fall slightly short too. Based on the little bit research I have done into the matter I think that one way to translate it (mentaly at least, not necessarily on paper) would be "community of called out ones" or "community of saints".

This fits well in virtually all instances of the word ekklesia in the NT; "I will build my community of saints and the gates of hades will not prevail against it", "to the community of saints in Corinth". It doesn't fit well with our modern day usage of the word though, "I went to the community of saints last Sunday" "We are looking for donations to build a community of saints"

I chose this definition because the members of the ekklesia are still members even when not gathered together, the ekklesia's life is manifested throughout the week as believers put into practice all those "one another" scriptures. But the real power and purpose of the ekklesia is when we gather together. Not when we "go to church" but when we gather together as a church.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/11/20 7:29**

I love the greeting from Clement's letter to the Church at Corinth.

"The Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

It captures so many truths about the Church

1. Church - 'called out' of every tribe and nation. No national churches here.

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2. Sojourners - how often we need this reminder
3. called - not just 'out of' but a reminder of our heavenly calling; God's glorious purpose
4. Sanctified - cut out and separated exclusively for the use of God.