

Lesson 1 – The Definition of a Church

I The meaning of the word church.

- A. The English word “church” comes from the Greek word “ecclesia” [ekklēsian].
1. “Ecclesia” comes from two Greek words “ek” meaning ‘from’ and “kalea” which means to ‘call out’. Hence, the word means “to call out from.”
 2. The word “ecclesia” was in common usage during the time of Christ. For instance, it was applied to the assembly of citizens in a city-state summoned by an individual blowing a horn through the streets.

Read Acts 19:35-41 (from verse 23) about Diana of the Ephesians

²³And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. ²⁴For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; ²⁵whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. ²⁶Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: ²⁷so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. ²⁸And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

²⁹And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. ³⁰And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. ³¹And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. ³²Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. ³³And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. ³⁴But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

*³⁵And when the **townclerk [mayor?]** had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city*

of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. ³⁷For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of **churches**, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. ³⁸Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. ³⁹But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. ⁴⁰As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.” ⁴¹After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

From Google: What is an example of ecclesia?

- A church or congregation.
 - Ecclesia is defined as a political assembly of citizens in the definition of ancient Greece, or the church members.
 - **A group of ancient Greek politicians who came to Athens to debate** is an example of an ecclesia.
 - The collective congregation of a church is an example of an ecclesia.
3. Any called out assembly could have been called “ecclesia.”
 4. Christ made use of the word ecclesia for His ‘called out’ assembly.

Read Mathew 16:18 (from verse 16) ¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.** ¹⁸**And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church** [“ecclesia” for His ‘called out’ assembly]; **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** ¹⁹**And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** ²⁰Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

B. The word church as we hear it or use it today.

1. The word “church” **[ekklēsian]** is used for a local body of organized and baptized believers. About 90% of the time, it is used in this sense in the Bible.
2. Sometimes the word “church” is used for a universal body of ALL believers. [i.e.; the Catholic Church *Catholic* comes from the

Greek *katholikos*, the combination of two words, *kata* (concerning), and *holos* (whole). According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the word *catholic* comes from a Greek word meaning “regarding the whole,” or, more simply, “universal” or “general.”
<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/what-does-catholic-mean>]

- a. This is an improper use of the word “church” and is not scriptural.
 - b. We could never imagine ALL believers in a “called out” assembly of believers.
3. The word “church” is also used for a domination, such as, the Baptist Church, meaning all Baptists. This is an improper use and has no scriptural basis.
 4. It has become very common to refer to the meeting house as a church. Scripturally speaking, this is an improper use – people form a church, not bricks, wood, and mortar.
- C. Definition of a New Testament church – A New Testament Church is a visible, **local**, organized body; that is composed of baptized believers associated together by a covenant of faith and fellowship in the Gospel.

II The New Testament usages of the word “church.”

- A. Of the 117 times the word “church” is used in the New Testament, all but 5 refer to Christ’s ecclesia. These 112 uses of the word refer to either a particular assembly on Earth or to His generally assembly in glory.
- B. The common and usual meaning of the word “Church” is a particular assembly of Christ’s believers on Earth as “unto the church of God which is at Corinth”.

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3 ¹Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ²unto the church [**“ecclesia”**] of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their’s and our’s: ³grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- C. To see how particular assemblies of churches are addressed collectively in the plural number (which indicates individual identity and usage).

Read Galatians 1:1-2 ¹Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) ²and all the brethren which are with me, **unto the churches ["ecclesia"] of Galatia:** ³grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: ⁵to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

III The name "Baptist."

- A. The name Baptist, originally from John the Baptist because of the mode of baptism (immersion) used by him.
- B. The name was given to him by God.
 - 1. Early in Christian history the name "**Baptist**" was given to those churches who steadfastly to the original God-given truths.
 - 2. Through the years, this name Baptist has served to identify those churches that could still be identified with the New Testament church.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "church"?
2. Name the different ways the word "church" is used today?
3. How many times is the word "church" used in the New Testament?
4. What is a local New Testament church?
5. Where do we get the name Baptist?

Discussion: How do we make our church a better church?

Memory scripture: Matthew 16:13-14 ¹³When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ¹⁴And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

Scripture reading: Continuing Matthew 16:15-28

¹⁵He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

*¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: **for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.** ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church** [ekklesiān]; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ²⁰Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*

*²¹From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. ²²Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. ²³But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.***

*²⁴Then said Jesus unto his disciples, **If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** ²⁵For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. ²⁶For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. ²⁸Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

<p>The Holy Spirit flows through yielded men, NOT machinery.</p>
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