

What Is The 'Church?'

Church Membership
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Bible Text: Acts 19:32-41
Preached on: Sunday, March 5, 2017

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We'll be in Acts 19 to start our discussion this evening and we're going to do a little talking about the church, particularly church membership and so this can either go wonderfully or horribly and we'll see. We'll see how it goes.

Acts 19 and we're going to look at a particular word in the New Testament and how it is used in the New Testament. A particular word but before we do, we'll have a word of prayer and ask God to bless our time of study. If you need a study sheet in the back, they're on that cart next to that loaf of bread. That loaf, that's singular, so it's over there on that cart next to the lonely loaf of bread. A special thanks, again, to Brother Walter for five fabulous weeks of Philippians and why don't we have a word of prayer to get us started this evening?

Lord, thank you for the opportunity to study your word. It is perfect and we bow before you, the Author of it. We know that you're able to teach us and we accept the calling to be learners. So please enable us, give us supernatural Holy Spirit enabled learning this evening. Open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things out of your law. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to talk to you about a particular word for just a few minutes. The word is "ekklesia." It is a Greek word and it has the idea of "being called out." "Ek" is Greek prefix that means "out; or out of; or out from." "Klesia" means "one who is called." So ekklesia, called out ones.

So in Acts 19, we get an understanding that often New Testament words have a definition and they have a usage. Brothers and sisters, that is a wonderful thing for us to get so I'm going to say it again. I know we usually think that the first five minutes of our opening are Jolly Ranchers and getting out our favorite pen. But we're being really serious. We need to be listening here. This word "ekklesia" has a New Testament definition and a New Testament usage. Words matter in every way and they are chosen by God for a specific thing.

In Acts 19, you are in the middle of the third missionary trip. The third missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. That is a piece of data that you can track yourself by the way he departs from and returns to the town that was his base of operations known as what?

(unintelligible) Pretty close. Those are all fantastic biblical towns but Antioch. Antioch. In Acts 11, believers were called, Christians were called or I should say believers were called Christians first at Antioch. All mission trips start and end at Antioch.

Alright so, here is now in Acts 19 in the part of his third missionary journey, you can see that he's in Ephesus and he starts, well, I suppose a lot of preachers could be hopefully at some time in their life, they could be accused of starting riots and in Acts 19, we find that Paul is no different. He's accused of starting a riot, particularly in verse 28, "Now when they heard this, they," the people of Ephesus, "were full of wrath and cried out, saying, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'" Now I know I've just dropped you right in the middle of a context. That wasn't really fair. But you get from verse 29, "So the whole city was filled with confusion." Now I don't know if you understand to what degree Paul was effective. I used to know a preacher that I enjoyed listening to said, "When I come into town, I either want to start a revival or a riot." Needless to say, he never preached in my church because we didn't want the 50% chance of a riot.

But here he preaches and the people in Ephesus have a real problem. The whole city, in verse 29, is filled with confusion and look what they did, "they rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius," if you remember the study with the epistles of John from Walter in late summer, you remember that name, "and Aristarchus," and these guys are, "Macedonians, Paul's travel companions," verse 29.

Now we're in chapter 19, verse 30, "And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater." Brothers and sisters, you can get on the internet today and look up the coliseum in Ephesus and you can see exactly the structure used. Have you been there, Brother Walter?

("I stood right there in that (unintelligible). You stand there and somebody sitting 100 yards up can hear you talk. So it's there. (unintelligible) So if you ever get to go, that's a good place.") I understand 20,000 could sit there, okay? So if you can imagine a structure where apparently the entire population, or at least enough where the writer of Acts felt comfortable saying the entire population, verse 29, "the whole city," went into this theater. There was probably less than 20,000 there that were populating the city and there they go into this theater and Paul, who is responsible for a great deal of this uprising, think about that, responsible through his preaching because you might know what exactly happened is in verse 23 and 24. A silversmith basically he caused a big problem because the big trade of idol making is in serious jeopardy now because people are getting saved and they're no longer buying idols. Okay? This is pretty wild.

So Paul, verse 30, I don't know, I would be tempted to go to the Greyhound depot, Paul wanted to go in to the people that he incited in verse 30. Verse 31, "Then some of the

officials of Asia," Asia is shorthand for Asia Minor, so this is not the continent of Asia as we know it now. It's basically modern day what? Yes, Turkey, thank you, Jack. So he's in Ephesus, a town in Turkey, a city in Turkey, and he's got the officials of Asia or of Turkey, verse 31, "sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another," here we go, "for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together."

("Like the riots.") Crowd dynamics. Yeah, riots. Boy, there's a fight going on, let's go see.

("Let's figure out which party they belong to first.") Right. Yes.

("They probably had them both there.")

Well, you do know that we're students of crowd dynamics here and everyone likes a crowd and that's why large churches get larger because everyone likes a crowd. And here we have people going to be a part of a crowd and notice what the crowd is called in verse 32, it's called an assembly. The word "assembly" is the word "ekklesia."

Now we're going to keep reading. "And they drew Alexander," verse 33, "out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people." And as Walter just pointed out, that was possible because of the acoustics, the acoustical design of that theater.

Verse 34, "But when they found out that he was a Jew," this Alexander, "all with one voice cried out for about two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'" One of the Seven Wonders of the World was in Ephesus, remember the Temple of Diana, 90 foot pillars, 127 of them around the Temple of Diana. Ninety foot pillars, brothers and sisters. That's no small thing. Noah's ark was 45 feet tall. We're talking about twice the height of Noah's ark. 127 pillars around the Temple of Diana. Diana was the rock star of Ephesus. She was the goddess of fertility. Be careful when you Google Diana.

Verse 35, "And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: 'Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?'" I mean, we all know who we all belong to. Hush!

Verse 36, "Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly." So we have the word "assembly" being used first in verse 32, and we have the word being used again in verse 39. In verse 32, it is being used of a mob, and in verse 39, it's being used of a lawful group. Do you see that? Same word in verse 32 used of a mob, in verse 39 used of a lawful gathering, but in both cases, the King James and New King James use the word "assembly." The word 115 other times

found in the Greek New Testament is translated one way in the King James and New King James Bible. Do you want to take a guess at what that is?

(unintelligible) Church. You guessed and that's all I asked for, you're good. Church. So the Greek word "ekklesia" is used 118 times in the Greek New Testament, 115 times it is translated "church." Three times it is translated something different, it's translated "assembly" and it is only translated that here. Interesting. You might remember the Bible is not written in English, not even Shakespearean English for some of you purists. It was written in Greek.

Verse 40, "For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar." So who is this Ephesian clerk, who is he afraid is going to hold them in question? Come on, now. Act like you've been in a class about Philippians for the last five weeks.

("Rome.") Rome. Concerned, Romans don't like riots. So the Ephesian local, the municipal government of Ephesus said, "If we don't get this junk under control, Rome is going to show up and take over so we've got to keep this stuff under control."

Verse 41, "And when he had said these things, he dismissed the," and here it is the third time. If I were you, and I'm not, I would probably circle the word "assembly" in verse 32, I would probably circle it in verse 39, I would probably circle it in verse 41, and I might probably, if you had other activity going on in that page of your Bible, I would probably draw a line between the three circles and that would remind me that it is the same word being used in all three verses.

Now, I did not bring you here to show you a mob, I brought you to this for two purposes: 1. verse 39, verse 41, verse 32, assembly, assembly, assembly. I brought you here for two reasons: 1. to show you that the same Greek word can be used of two different ideas in the same passage, 1. a mob, 2. a lawful crowd. Let me show it to you again. Verse 32, "therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together." That ekklesia, why don't we use the word that's used 115 or 118 times, that church gathered and they did not know why. Verse 39, "it shall be determined in the lawful church."

You see, when we go to the New Testament, and this is the second thing I want you to see. The first thing is that the same word is used of two opposite ideas in the same passage: mob and lawful assembly. What do you think a lawful assembly in verse 39 would be kind of analogous or comparable to in today's society. If you have the city clerk saying in verse 39, "if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly."

("A jury.") A jury, okay.

("Congress.") A Congress, a jury, those are great. Some decision making body at the municipal level. Yeah?

("A court of law.") A city council, a court of law, whatever. So we have the same word being used two different ways here in the same passage. Verse 32, a mob. Verse 39, what amounts to a city council. One totally confused, disarray, no order; the other, lawful orderly and almost, we might say, dictatorial.

Okay, so what's the second thing I want you to notice? That this is the understanding of that word in first century Roman custom. Alright, so here's how we work, brothers and sisters. Come on, work with me here. Some of you were born as early as the 1950s, 1940s perhaps. When you grew up with the word "church," what kind of understanding did you get? What's the first thing that popped into your head when you heard the word "church" growing up?

("Lutheran.") Okay, a denomination or a type of religious organization. What else? What else popped into your head when you heard the word "church"? Say again, Rick.

("Jesus.") You thought about Jesus. How about...what? Love, okay? So you thought about ideas. What about as it comes to defining the word "church"?

("Fellowship. A building.") A building. I lived two blocks from a church. I did. My first almost 19 years I walked to church. Walked to school, walked to church. Two blocks, not even two full blocks. If I cut through the neighbor's yard, it was half a block. So very close and when we talked about "the church" we were talking about the building.

What if someone now says, "I grew up in the church"? Do they mean in a particular building? What do they mean?

(unintelligible) ("That they attended that place." "People being called out of the world.") Okay, so a generally understood carved out of the world, a generally understood group of people that met together. That's a little purer.

What about someone who says, "I've lost a lot of faith in the church"? What are they talking about then? Because we've already taught two sense of the word: a building, a group of people. Now we have a third sense of how the word is used in our understanding. "I've lost a lot of faith in the church."

("Body of believers.") Religion. So if you said, "The church really disappointed me growing up," are we talking about a building, a group of people or a third sense that we haven't mentioned yet?

(unintelligible) Say again, Nicky. ("The pastor.") Okay, a pastor.

("Other believers.") Other believers.

("The ruling body of the church, the ones that made the decisions.") Okay, an institution. So you thought about.... huh?

("Religion in general.") Religion in general. So an institutional organization, right?

So let me see if I can make this a little usable for today. If I say I like McDonald's, now please no vicious comments. I do enjoy hamburgers with heavy ketchup, Shamrock Shakes, McRib's, and McGriddle, just to name a few. Other than that, I can't stand McDonald's. Chicken McNuggets and other things. But anyway, other than that, I don't care for McDonald's, alright? So let's just say that I say, "I love McDonald's," am I talking about a particular McDonald's?

("No." "The franchise.") The franchise. So we have the building, the church; we have an individual group of people that we when we think of church, we think of, "Oh yeah, Linda Jones, Rick H., Nicky Sturm. I think of Dot Myers, blah, blah, blah." The group of people. Then we have now this third way we use the word and that is institutionally or coporately.

So when I say, "I love McDonald's, I love McDonald's a ton," I'm saying any McDonald's, particularly any McDonald's in any location, even though there may be exceptions. When I say, "I like McDonald's," I might be talking about the one on Springs Road, I might be talking about the one on 127. I'm not talking about the one in Taylorsville, alright? Did I say that out loud?

So there are different McDonald's. That's that middle sense, a particular location. A particular group of people. Make my coffee, alright? Whatever, okay? Over here when I say, "I love McDonald's," the franchise, I'm saying I love the idea of McDonald's as it's found in any of the given locations.

So all of a sudden we have three senses of how we use the word "church" growing up: a building, a particular group of people that met in a building because we always heard the church is you, it's not the building. Got it. Then a third sense in which we are referring to the church generally, all churches grouped together and we call it the church like I would say, "I love McDonald's," I'm not meaning any particular McDonald's, I'm meaning the idea of McDonald's that I can find in any location.

Well, here's a fourth sense and this fourth sense is the sense of the New Testament believer. Alright, think through this with me. In Acts 19, you have two ways in which the word "church" is used. Do you remember? It's the same word that's translated "church" 115 times in the New Testament. This chapter is the only exception and it is translated "assembly" and it is used either of an unlawful mob or a lawful city council type gathering. So knowing that, you're a teenager and you hear the word "ekklesia" anywhere in the Greco-Roman empire, what are you thinking? Religious body? Hopefully not. You should be thinking about the political institution found in every city.

Where is my proof text? The one we read. The one we read. A lawful assembly, Acts 19:39. If Ephesus had a lawful assembly and it was a part of the Greco-Roman empire, every town of a particular size had a politically governing body called in today's language a "church."

Let's go through it again. I don't want to lose anyone in the dust. The Bible is not written in English, written in Greek. The Greek word here is "ekklesia." It's translated "assembly" here but everywhere else in the New Testament it's translated "church." That means that if you're living in Acts 19's day and if you've never met a Christian, when you hear the word "ekklesia" you think of a politically ruling body in a given city. If you travel to Philippi, what would you find there? An ekklesia, thank you. If you traveled to Colossae, what would you find there? An ekklesia. If you traveled to Rome, what would you find there? So I guess you get what I'm saying. Donuts, is that what you said? I don't think about food much either.

So let's go to the first time the word "ekklesia" is used in the New Testament. The very first time. Look at Matthew 16. This foundation is necessary and as far as I can tell, it's nowhere on your notes. You're welcome. But the notes will come back next week improved and so you just transfer your answers to the form that will be available next week.

Matthew 16, look at verse 13. The fact that Matthew picked up his red pen should tell you that Jesus is going to be talking a little bit in the middle of this passage. Good, you got that. I need someone, please, to read verses 13 through 18. Who will do that, please?

("I have a different version.") That would be fine, Debbie. Go ahead.

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Alright, so there are two fantastic contributing things here and then a contradiction. So let's talk about two contributions to the same idea. We just talked about what Peter would have thought when he heard the word "ekklesia," right? He grew up in the Acts 19 world and ekklesia is a civic, lawmaking, governing body, right? Like a city council. If that's what it is, if it's a governing body at an echelon of the Roman government, then how would you respond to Jesus saying in verse 18, "I will build my ekklesia"? What would you think Jesus meant?

("Governing body.") A governing body. Why? Because ekklesia is not a Christian word, brothers and sisters. It's a Greek word. It's been translated "church" and you were born in

America and you grew up with a Christianized version of a word that existed a long time before Jesus came to earth as a man and it had a meaning. What was the meaning? "A civic, lawmaking, governing body." So when Jesus shows up on the scene and says, "I'm going to start my own and I'm going to build it on the rock," what do you think? What do you think Jesus is about to do? Start his own lawmaking governing body.

Alright, now that we've discussed that, what are the Jews already expecting?

("A new ruler.") A new ruler to deliver them from who? The Roman empire. So the Jews are already expecting a particular Messiah that is going to come and deliver them from their occupiers, the Roman empire, and here comes someone who can heal all the wounded in his army, feed all the soldiers in his army, raise all the KIA from his army, and then he says, "I'm going to start my own governing body."

Now think this through. When we went to Iraq in 2003, Donald Rumsfeld said that it takes ten support soldiers for every rifleman. Why? Because you need fuel, you need food, you need bullets, you need beans. You need ten support soldiers behind every rifleman. Now, what happens if your grunts, okay, I'm sorry, your infantrymen. Some of you Jarheads, help me out back there.

("I knew that was coming.") Yeah. What happens if you ain't got to wait on those ten? What does that mean about your progress?

("You're not going to make it.") Well, brother, if you don't need the ten because you've got a guy in your army that can produce food on demand by the thousands, he fed 5,000, he fed again he fed 4,000. On demand he makes his own food. There is no log pack you have to wait on. On demand he raises people from the dead. You have no condolence letters to write home to families. On demand he heals people. You have no wounded in action, no Walter Reed, no Bethesda Naval Hospital, none of that is needed. He heals his wounded, he raises his dead, he feeds his people and we've seen him cast out devils. Then he says after it's true that you've been expecting him to come and crush the Romans, he says, "I'm here to set up my ekklesia. I'm here to set up my governing body." And then he says in verse 19, "Peter, I will give you the keys of the kingdom." Now what does that mean? If you're stepping up to the front porch of Rome, let's say, and someone says, "Brother Dennis, we're going to give you the keys to the city," what does that mean? You the man. You decide who gets in and out of the city. You are in charge of the city, right?

So Jesus tells that group of disciples, it's the second person plural. "I've given y'all the keys of the kingdom and I have given y'all the keys of the kingdom and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven." All of a sudden they realize Jesus is not just going to rule from Rome, he's going to bring heaven down to earth in answer to the prayer he told us to pray in chapter 6, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven." All of a sudden we're not letting people into a Roman empire, we're letting them into heaven.

Okay, so you're a disciple, do you want to be a part of this? You want to be a part of the church, don't you? Remember, a church is not you get together, sit in rows and look at a bald funny guy yack at you for 40 minutes. No, a church in their mind is a lawmaking, domineering, governing, civic organization.

("Like the Romans already.") Like the Romans already had and like the one the Romans needed taken away, or I should say, the Hebrews needed taken away.

So then you understand Peter's confusion. When in verse 21 Jesus tells them that he, the King of this kingdom and the pontificate of this new ekklesia is going to do what?

("In verse 19?") Verse 21.

("He's go to die.") He's got to die. Well, that can't happen. I mean, he can make his own food; he can heal his own wounded; he can raise his own dead; he can basically call down fire from the sky; he can calm the storm, that's already happened; he can walk on the water. Okay, we are ready to set up shop.

("Legions of angels.") Not yet but we're getting there.

(unintelligible) That's right. He came here, Matthew 20:28, to give his life a ransom for many. So Jesus' kingdom is completely different than what the disciples were expecting but what I need you to see is what the disciples were expecting.

Now, imagine superimposing on this a modern understanding of the word "church," and this idea of this universal church where it doesn't matter where you belong because everyone who is saved is part of the church. Imagine that. Imagine how foreign that concept is to this mindset. Where every town has an ekklesia and you are under the jurisdiction of that ekklesia. And then, and then bring today's modern churchianity and bring this idea that it doesn't matter what kind of church you belong to or if you belong to a church because if you're saved, you're a part of the church. Imagine taking that strange universal weirdness and shoving it on top of this understanding of the word "ekklesia." Totally preposterous, right? Totally preposterous.

("It would be chaotic in their minds.") Right. Okay, okay, okay, so, so, so, imagine saying, "Well, what town do you live in?" "I live in all of them." "What town do you belong to?" "I belong to the all-town." "Who is your mayor?" "Well, I don't really have a mayor." "Well, where is your address?" "In heaven." You see, how flippant we get in modern Christianity about belonging to an ekklesia when there is not a chance this side of Hades that anyone in the first century as a believer would have thought that that was an acceptable way to use that word. It comes with a specific understanding, a local city, every city has an ekklesia, and everyone is under the jurisdiction of some ekklesia.

Jesus comes and why does he use the word "ekklesia" when there are other words to use? Okay, let's talk through that. Why does he say, "I will build my church," knowing the confusion it would cause for his disciples? Why would he use such a word?

("What other word would he use?") Well, synagogue. That is a Greek word that means a gathering. He could have used that and that would have been a whole lot easier transition for Christianized Jews. "Oh, okay, so instead of going to a house to hear the law read, we now gather around Jesus." That's one word he could have used. He didn't use the word for synagogue, he used the word that would have incited within the understanding person of the first century local, every city authoritative. What are the implications?

("Maybe he's talking about the kingdom of heaven and not something on earth.") Right. So, Brent is correct. Rome, there is a corporate headquarters called Rome and what was the ruling body in Rome? What was the ekklesia in Rome? The Senate. So there is a worldwide empire headed by the Emperor headquartered in Rome and that Roman agenda is exercised through ekklesias happening in every town. Now Jesus comes to earth and he brings a kingdom of heaven, chapter 16, verse 19 of Matthew. What does that mean? That kingdom is headquartered where? In heaven. "I have come to build my ekklesia." Headquartered in heaven and what would you expect, since he's using a Roman term, a Greek term, what would you expect about the observable component of that kingdom headquartered in heaven? He used a particular word so that the reader would make the connection, okay? I know this is slow moving. I know this is stuff that, "Oh man, I just can't wait to go and talk about a particular Greek word tonight. It's going to be fantastic."

But if you have a kingdom headquartered in Rome and it is expressed in every city of a particular size and it is exercised in a governing body known as a ekklesia and Jesus comes and say, "I have a kingdom headquartered in heaven," chapter 16, verse 19, "a kingdom of heaven," you would expect what when he says, "I have an ekklesia as well"? What would you expect?

(unintelligible) That would be set up and what would be the character of it? You would expect this ekklesia to look like the headquartered in heaven kingdom and you would expect to see these representations of this kingdom where? Say again, Bethany. Every city. Why? Because that is how they understood the word. These are things Jesus didn't have to explain to his readers, or I should say, his listeners. These are things Matthew did not have to explain to his readers because they grew up then.

So to say, "Ah, it doesn't matter if you understand the historical context of something," is absolutely maddening. Of course you need to understand the historical understanding of something otherwise you're going to think that Jesus came here to start a group of people that meets on Sundays, sings hymns and then eventually everyone in the place dies and that's that. But when you realize that the kingdom of heaven has an end-state, it is to cover the whole earth and to have representation where? Every city. And those representations in every city are called? ("Ekklesia.") The English word is... ("Church.")

The Great Commission is not, brothers and sisters, anything short of putting a church in every city. "So go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you." That is what we do on Sundays. That is what we do Monday through Saturday when we evangelize the world, we baptize the converts and then we teach them all things that we've been commanded to. That's Matthew 28:18-20. How do we do that, when do we do it? In our ekklesia and our job is to find more population pockets that need representations of headquarters. That's our job. Our job is not to become a body of hundreds of thousands here in Hickory. Our job is not to have endless building programs where we can sit and feel good about how great we are because we have 700 in church. Our job is to find cities that need ekklesias. That is our job. That is the Great Commission.

Are we having fun yet? What are your questions so far?

(unintelligible) What verse are you talking about? ("He says, 'I will build my church...")
Sure. (unintelligible) Yeah, what we can be confident of is that Jesus will build his organization. Yup. Good point. That's right.

Now, I have lots that I could say about the gates of hell thing there but that's kind of off topic.

Anyone else? Did I hear you say something, Terry?

("Yeah, how do you spell ekklesia?") E-k-k-l-e-s-s-i-a. Let me just check. It's transliterated form so either way it's a whitey's way of spelling a Greek word so let me...hang on. Is it one "s"? E-k-k-l-e-s-i-a, right? Okay. Alright.

Alright, so that's a good introduction, huh? Alright, so look at 1 Corinthians 12, then. 1 Corinthians 12. When you, brothers and sisters, maybe you're not exactly tracking what I'm getting at here, but when we are seeing this together, a lot of how we do things, a lot of why we do things will become amazingly obvious. I don't want to take for granted that everyone is going to agree with everything that we say in this week and the two maybe three weeks to follow, but what I do want us to come to in agreement here is that the Scripture is true, even if it disagrees with something that we have taught and taught or have taught. I don't know. Go ahead.

("How long did they use the word 'ekklesia'? I mean, is it used that way all the way through the New Testament or is it used...when did they change it to 'the body' or 'the church'?") Well, the Greeks always used it in a way where the Christian would have certain things come to mind when they think of a Christian ekklesia. When you think of a Christian ekklesia, you're thinking every city, representing the kingdom.

("Okay, so why did they or when did they change it to or always used...because sometimes we're called the church and sometimes it's called the body so there must have been two different words?") It is two different words. Yeah, it's "soma" is the Greek word for "body," I believe, and "ekklesia" is the Greek word for "church." And we'll look at that passage in Ephesians 1 which is right before us. Yup, good question.

1 Corinthians 12 and we'll take a look at verse 20. I would like, please, for someone to read verses 20-26. Okay, Mitzy, please.

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Alright, thank you. I really appreciate it. You read like a teacher. I enjoyed it.

So we are talking about many, what, of the same, what? Members. So you might notice these verses, first blank, these verses tell us that the church is the body of Christ and is made up of individual members. Now, we can't use this word two ways, brothers and sisters. Please, please notice, this will make you roll your eyes at a Christian concert, you've got to hear me: you can't get 100-200-800-1,000 people together and you're not sure what they all believe and the dude in charge of the concert says, "Sing it with me, church." Well, first of all, you're not a part of the same church. You can see very clearly as clear as this big German nose on my face, that he's talking to a particular church and he calls them "the body" and the people in that body, "members of the body." We have no biblical liberty to call people of different churches members of the same body. You have no biblical authority to do that.

("Say that one more time.") We have no biblical authority to call members of different churches part of the same body.

("Different denominations...") Different denominations but let me just assume that there's another church in Hickory that loves Jesus like we do, preaches the truth like we do, we're not even allowed scripturally, I'm not saying it's an awful crime against God, certainly certainly, we can say some things inaccurately and it not hurt the cause of Christ, but biblical precision is a love of mine and biblical precision does not allow us to take members of different churches and call them the same body. You see just as plain as this receding hairline all the way to the back of my head, you can see he's talking to one church in Corinth and he calls them members of a body. Yes?

Now, pray tell, what kind of sense would this make if they weren't members of the same body? For example, Wayne, if you're supposed to profit from me being an eye and you being an arm, how can we possibly profit one another if we're members of different churches? This is not some kind of strange...this is biblical doctrine, how that God puts people in particular churches as members of that body.

Verse 27, someone please read 27 through 30.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

Alright, this is where it's going to get crazy. If it's true that my giftings are given to me, who or what are they for?

("The body.") Which body?

("The ones listening.") That one that I'm in. If you have a gift, it is to be used primarily, maybe not only but biblically, since we're concerned about biblical conciseness, your gift is primarily for your body, your church. Maybe not only but certainly primarily and this is where my wife would say, "Now relax and let them soak it in."

(unintelligible) ("My mind is going out, okay all the other bodies, all the other bodies that are a part of Jesus...") You're not going too fast. Certainly, the gifts that you have are usable to the third sense, corporate body, but in this passage, the only authority you have to apply it to the body is the one Paul is speaking to.

Let's put it this way, Paul, if we were to back up to our McDonald's scenario and Paul was talking about how to put a Big Mac together and Paul was talking to a particular McDonald's at a particular address, no one would say, "Ah, he didn't mean that for us particularly, he meant that for all McDonald's everywhere." No. He was talking to a particular crew that was shooting themselves in the foot and botching up a Big Mac.

So here, brothers and sisters, in this very body, when Paul gives them something in chapter 11 called, what according to verse 17 through 27? What would you call verses 23 and following? What would you call that? Chapter 11, verses 23 through 26, what would you call that?

(unintelligible) Say it again, the Lord's supper. Who is the Lord's supper for?

(unintelligible) The body of where in this particular context? The Lord's supper, Paul is relaying it in a letter, to who?

("Corinthians.") And he wants them to practice it correctly, primarily who are the Corinthian believers supposed to celebrate the Lord's supper with?

("The body.") The body.

("Each other.") Made up of?

(unintelligible) Use chapter 12. What did you say, Shannon?

("Their particular body.") Their particular members, their particular body. You would never come away from 1 Corinthians 11 and 12 and think, "I can't wait to go to the Holy Land and have the Lord's supper by the Jordan River with no one in particular except my tour group." There is no biblical authority for that. Do you know how many times I've served the Lord's supper as an Army chaplain? Do you know why? It wasn't given to the chaplain, it was given to the church. Do you know how many times I've baptized a convert in the Army? You say, "But I always liked getting baptized in the surf at the Gulf of Mexico." You're going to get some other joker to do it, I ain't doing that. But baptism and the Lord's supper belong to the church. You would never come away from the epistles saying, "Thank God, I can't wait until I go with Chuck Swindoll on the next Holy Land tour. We're gonna have the Lord's supper with Pepsi and Doritos." That's how he did it, brothers. No one is coming away saying, "Find your favorite Bible teacher and enjoy the Lord's supper with them at the next Bible conference." Completely unbiblical. Do you see how this works?

("So if someone is saved at a convention and he doesn't have a church affiliation, then he...") He needs one, doesn't he? ("He does and then he's going to have to have some time before he's baptized to...") Well, let's go through, let's think about Pentecost. So Pentecost, how many local churches were there?

(unintelligible) Well, there was...

("At Pentecost?") Yes. ("They were just all meeting in the Upper Room.")

("They came from different locations.")

("Yeah, but they weren't churches at that point, were they?") Well, let's take a look at Acts 2. Don't worry. I'm not going to embarrass your guests at the Lord's supper but you need to know biblically the Lord's supper is enjoyed by the church amongst its members.

("So what you're saying is that if you weren't a member, you shouldn't partake?") I am not going to say that at this point and time here at Sandy Ridge Baptist Church but that is the scriptural perspective.

("So Scripture never goes past the point that it's the church that's considered just abiding in one place?") It does and we'll get to that in weeks to come.

("In the military and in the field, after they're saved they can't be baptized?") I'm not baptizing. Who baptizes? Alright, let's work through this, brothers and sisters. That's a great question. Why would you leave a soldier unbaptized? But first of all, I'm not all that concerned because if he gets baptized and he's unsaved, he's just a wet sinner, right? And if he doesn't get baptized and he is saved, he still goes to heaven.

("Say the last part again.") If he gets saved but not baptized, he still goes to the same heaven I do, right?

So let's work through this. Jesus has 12 disciples. Work through this with me. What does "ekklesia" mean again? "Ek, out; klesia, called; called out ones." Jesus walks by Peter and Andrew and what does he do? He says to them... ("Follow me.") He calls them out, calls them out from the fishing business. Walks by James and John, sons of Zebedee on their fishing boats and what does he do? Calls them out. John 1, he finds Philip first, Philip finds Nathaniel, and Philip says, "Where are you staying?" And Jesus says to him, "Come, seek." So he's calling people out to assemble around him and he says to Peter, "I will build my church." So if Jesus doesn't have a church with him, what does he have? If the disciples are not the church, who is?

And then we come back to chapter 2 and we see in chapter 2 and verse 40, the end of Peter's sermon, Pentecost,

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Now, who has the word "church" in their version of the Bible? I do. So about half of you. ("Added to their number.") Yeah. Well, there is a conversation to be had there and it's a good conversation but some Bibles do not have the word "church" there for a good reason. The Greek behind them doesn't have the word "church." So, clearly there is some manuscript evidence, there are some Bibles, there are some Bible translators that believe that there was a church already in existence at Pentecost and that these 3,000 souls were added to that one church, and that church had 3,000 but at one time just a couple days earlier, how many did it have in it? Well, we see in verse 15 of Acts,

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty),

So there was a determinable number of members in that body, 120. So there was 120 people numbered and by the end of Pentecost 3,000 were added to that number. So when we say people are being saved, well, what we have here is we have people being

baptized, then that means that the people who are baptizing them are who? The people who are already a part of the number.

So Peter is preaching, do you think Peter had the ability to baptize 3,000 that day? You talk about needing a sandwich. Phew, 3,000, right? So Peter was not the only one dunking folk, alright. He was not. It means he had some help. Well, who was doing it?

(unintelligible) Right. Because in Matthew 28, before Jesus goes to heaven, he says, look back at Matthew 28:18. You can catch me in verse 19 if you're still turning. Matthew 28:18,

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Well, if he was calling out disciples and if they were his church, who is Jesus giving the task of both evangelism and baptism to? The church, those making up the church.

("Would that be the 125 then, essentially before the 3,000?") Well, it's 11 here, at least, plus whoever he gained, Paul said up to 500 brethren after his resurrection, right?

("But only 120...") 120 in Acts 1, yeah, and 3,120 by Acts 2. So baptism is a task of the church. It is a task to be done among the church, by the church. And so if I were to find a soldier that was saved but not baptized, since baptism is done by the church, it's done for the church, it is the only New Testament understanding of a profession of faith, you don't tell everyone you're saved by saying, "Hey, everyone, I'm saved," you tell everyone you're saved by the action of baptism. So if it's for the church to identify Christians, then it makes no sense for me to baptize someone away from the church.

("So if a person gets saved, like, say....the next thing you should ask him is to find a church to become a member?") That's right. ("And then get back to us.") That's right. Yup. It is natural for a Christian to want to be around other Christians. If I say, "I love McDonald's." You do? "Yeah." What do you like about them? "Well, I'm particularly happy about McDonald's around late January to late February when you get both the McRib and the Shamrock Shake." You see, you love that stuff. "Man, I love it." What do you do when you eat it? "I just thank God. Just thank God and try not to wreck." So which McDonald's do you like to go to? "None of them." I thought you loved McDonald's? "I do." Well, which McDonald's do you frequent? "None of them." You see, there's a disconnect. A disconnect. "I love Jesus." You do? "Yeah." How much do you love Jesus? "Oh, I love Jesus." Do you love his followers? "Oh yeah." Which church are you a member of. "None."

("You can't grow without it." "Go watch television.") Yeah, watch it on tv. Well, have Jimmy Swaggert come and visit you in the hospital if you think it's safe.

Well, we didn't make it very far. So anyway, we got, what, 2, 3 blanks. Three blanks.

("We need a little bit more room.") More room for blanks.

These verses tell us that the church is the body of Christ and is made up of individual members. Yeah, I'm afraid that's as far as we got but so that everyone feels good about finishing at least one of our numbers, the fourth blank is "bride." Okay, bride.

Alright, any other comments or questions?

("...baptizing out in the desert....") Oh, it's wonderful. It's beautiful. It makes me cry but it's not biblical.

("Unless that's where they figure they're going to be spending their time as a body for how long, they don't know how long.") Yeah, you are right. Dot introduces a conversation that will be had at another time as to whether or not you could conceive of a temporary church body, thus authorizing baptism. Great idea. I really appreciate you bringing that up here at the end. Great conversation.

Debbie, what were you saying? ("Like in a war field.") Like in a war field, right. ("You don't know how long you're going to be there.") Right. ("And you don't know if you're going to come back dead or alive.") Right, and then you've got to decide is a church a church before it has a recognized pastor, membership voting, deacons in place, a treasury or those accouterments that are optional with a local church. These are great conversations to have and they are important.

("...because once you confess, you're saved.") When it comes to salvation, Penny. ("If you're not in a predicament where you can join a church.") You are correct. Your "it doesn't matter" statement is purely about salvation, you're correct. Yes. Saved is saved by believing the Gospel whether or not you ever do a headstand in a baptism pool or the splits or anything else.

("But the bottom line is, baptism is an outward display for the congregation of an inward change. Is that not correct?") That's correct. Yup, it is your way of saying, "I'm one of y'all."

("It doesn't have anything to do with salvation.") It has zero to do with salvation. We'd have to change the water after every baptism if it washed away your sins or else the next person would get ring around the collar.

("Can we go to McDonald's now?")

Alright, let us pray. Brother Walter, would you close our time in prayer?

Lord, we thank you for your Scriptures. Thank you, Lord, that you came and that you promised the establishment of your church here and we look for the time, Lord, when it's

also in heaven, that we have a place to look forward to and that really you, Lord, are in control. Thanks for the pastor and his opening of the Scriptures to us, Lord, and for our fellowship here. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Biblical Perspective on Church Membership

1. What is the church?

The church is "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly"¹ Acts 19:32, 39, 41 comprise the only times (of the 118) where this Greek word is mentioned in a context other than "religious", and we see it is either a mob (19:32) or a lawful, governing, local body (19:39). One begins to really see what the disciples would have expected when they heard this word used by the Lord (Matthew 16:18).

I Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 1:22-23 tell us that the church is the B_____ of Christ and is made up of I_____. M_____. Revelation 21.1-9 and Ephesians 5:21-32 show us the "great mystery" is that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it as his Br_____.

2. What is church membership?

A church is when the local body of Christ recognizes a person as a C_____.² In Acts 2:37-47 there are several characteristics that are demonstrated by those who are in the same church. First a person must R_____ and be B_____. Second, an individual must affirm the same core D_____ of the Bible. Third, the believer will F_____, both in and out of the church with other believers, as well as P_____ for them.

3. Is church membership biblical?

(Hebrews 13:17) As Christians we are to submit ourselves to the A_____ over us. If there is no local church membership then who do we know to obey?³ Also, if there is no local body of believers for whom is the pastor responsible?⁴ Since the believer is to submit to an elder, and the elder is responsible for certain souls, the believer must be a part of a local church body.

(I Timothy 5:17) We see that the elders who _____ well deserve double honor. If that be the case, how can a believer know if an elder is "worthy of double honor" is they have not "submitted" to his pastoral oversight.

Looking back to Acts 2:37-41 we see that there is a "n _____ record" of those who have believed on Christ. The church at Jerusalem was keeping a r_____ of growth.

1 Timothy 5:3-16, in this passage there are specific requirements to be met if the church is to support a W_____ financially. How would the church support specific widows if they did not have a prioritized list that would stem from the members of a local body of believers?

Turning over to Romans 16:1-16 the reader will see there is a distinct body of believers in Rome that are in churches that Paul knows. The amount of knowledge Paul has of these Christians is a clear example that these people are members of a s_____ body that serve there, and have served for a length of time that has made them of honorable mention.

4. Why should I be a member?

¹ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ekklesia* (Strong's 1577)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 23 Oct 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1577&t=KJV> >

² Jonathan Leeman, Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (Crossway, Wheaton Illinois, 2012), 29.

³ Is Church Membership Biblical; Matt Chandler, www.9marks.org/journal/church-membership-biblical

⁴ Ibid.

As a member I can have an active role in the d_____ of the church by the ability to vote in a congregational form of government. I will be able to be known as a member of that church (1 Corinthians 5:7). Looking at 1 Corinthians 5.1-12 the reader can see sin in the church which Paul deals with. The membership of the church is subject to D_____ from the church. A “brother” cannot be put *out*, if there is not a specific *in* to which he belongs.

I will be better fitted for S_____ (Acts 6:1-7).

Being a member places more credibility upon a person who has a desire to work in a particular ministry making me an active part in the E_____ or growth of the church (Ephesians 4.11-12).

As a member I will help the B_____ work properly (Ephesians 4.15-16). I will have the added blessing of being held

A_____ for my actions (Ephesians 4.25).

The church will look after the needs of W_____ (1 Timothy 5.1-3).

Now that we have seen the advantages of membership, let’s look as the disadvantages of not being a member.

1 Peter 5.1-5. If I am not a member that means I am not under the numbered F_____ of an under-shepherd or pastor to be looked after. This means I will miss out on the feeding of that flock as well as the careful watching of that shepherd. The under-shepherd will have to give an account to the Great Shepherd for the flock he has been given the oversight of; he needs to know who his sheep are. How can a shepherd know when one of his sheep is missing if he does not know which sheep do not belong to him?

5. What are the biblical requirements for church membership?

Acts 2.4-47. Those who were added to the church had first “R_____ his word” and then were “B_____.” The Lord “A_____” to the church daily those who were “saved.” A person must profess Christ as their Savior to be entered into the membership of the church.