



The New Testament Church

1. What is a church?
2. What are some common mistaken ideas about church?

I. What is a church?

A. The definition of the word church: (Etymology – or word origins)

A.1. The **English** word **church** is derived from the Scottish word “*kirk*” or the German word “*kirche*.” It is taken from the Greek word κυριακὸν “*kuriakon*” meaning “the Lord’s” or “belonging to the Lord.” – The church is that which belongs to the Lord, it is the Lord’s organization and property. This Greek word is used to describe the Lord’s supper (1 Cor. 11:20), and the Lord’s day (Rev. 1:10). The church belongs to the Lord. This is not “my” church or “our” church, this is the Lord’s church. The “church of God” is in the Genitive case which indicates possession and this is how the New Testament church is presented to us in the Bible (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5). The same could be said about “the house of God” when the reference pertains to the New Testament church. The church is that house which belongs to God, or it is God’s house (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17). **The church is the Lord’s.**

A.2. The word church is derived **Biblically** from the Greek word ἐκκλησία “*ekklesia*” meaning “a called-out assembly.” In the KJV the word “*ekklesia*” occurs 115 times in the Received Text and is translated “church” or “churches.” It is translated “assembly” 3 times (**Acts 19:32, 39, 41** – these passages are in reference to the Ephesian mob or assembly that was angry at Paul). In **Acts 7:38**, the word church (“*ekklesia*”) was used in reference to Old Testament Israelites who were called out of Egypt – but this does not pertain to the New Testament church. In **Acts 19:37**, the word “churches” here refer to the pagan temples. In **Heb. 12:23**, the “church of the firstborn” is in reference to all who are saved (it is composed of all whose names are written in Heaven) – this is a called-out gathering or congregation or assembly of the Redeemed, including the Old Testament believers. It does not apply nor refer to the New Testament church. In **1 Pet. 5:13**, the word church is *italicized* meaning it does not appear in the Greek text.

NOTE: The Critical Text “*ekklesia*” count is 114. In **Acts 2:47** the word “church” or “*ekklesia*” is not found in their Greek text. Modern translations reflect this omission.

In the New Testament the word church/churches predominantly refer to the Lord’s assembly or congregation or gathering either in a **particular or geographic sense**, or in a **generic sense** (example: Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23). Generic means that it pertains to no church in particular but to all churches comprehensively. **The church is an assembly or a congregation.**

B. The usage of the word church: (Philology – or word development and relationships)

- B.1. The classical use of the word “*ekklesia*” refers to a governmental or secular assembly.
- B.2. The spiritual use of the word “*ekklesia*” refers to a religious assembly or congregation or flock.
- B.3. **The Biblical definition of church** – when referring to the New Testament church, **the church is an assembly of baptized disciples (or believers) organized to carry out the Lord’s mandates.**

II. What are some common mistaken ideas of about church?

- A. The church is a building. (“*I am going to church*” – what they mean is they are going to the church meeting place).
- B. The church is referring to the Kingdom of God.
- C. The church is the universal, invisible, mystical body of Christ composed of believers who have been Spirit-baptized at the point of salvation. (This is like saying “*the church is an assembly of believers*”).
- D. The church a social club or a social servicing agent, and/or a political association.
- E. The church is a religious denomination. (There is no “The Baptist Church,” only Baptist churches)
- F. Church membership is a requirement for salvation. (included here: Baptismal salvation; infant baptism)
- G. The church is optional.
- H. The church is a bunch of hypocrites.
- I. The church is a business.
- J. The church is a cult. (“Spiritual abuse”/ “legalism”)