

GOD'S EKKLĒSÍA

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Before looking at passages that are generally used to support the idea that the word “church” is something universal, invisible, denominational, national, provincial, or anything other than a congregation, some foundational truths must be established.

1. There is a difference in the **meaning** of a word, the **use** of a word, or the **etymology** of a word.

- a. **Etymology** is the origin of a word and often some will look at the Greek word “ekklēsía” and see that it is made up of two Greek words “ek” which generally means “out of” and “kaléō” that means “to call.” Many will conclude from this that “ekklēsía” means “to call out” or “to call out of.”
- b. **Meaning** is the definition generally given by the lexicographer as supplied by the dictionary or lexicon. The general meaning given by Strong for the Greek word “ekklēsía” is given as follows: “a calling out, i.e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both):—assembly, church.” *Sword Searcher Bible Program*.
- c. **Use** is how a word is used which may or may not equal the etymology or meaning of the word. The English word “church” is used to designate many different things: Christianity, Christendom, believers, denomination, all believers on earth, currently all believers/saints on earth and/or in heaven, the elect, a congregation, a system of religion, a building, and the list goes on.
- d. Therefore, when answering the question as to the meaning of the English word “church” as is commonly used for the Greek word “ekklēsía,” it must be clear to the person to whom you are talking that you and they are on the same page and clearly understand what is being said to arrive at the truth.

2. Definition of terms must be established.

- a. The meaning of the Greek word “ekklēsía”: According to Thayer, “Properly it means *a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly*; so used **1.** among the Greeks from Thucydides (423 B.C.) [c.f. Herodotus (484-408 B.C.) 3, 142] down, *an assembly of the people* convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating, Acts 19:39. **2.** in the Sept. often equiv. to qahal, *the assembly of the Israelites*, Judg. 21:8; I Chron. 29:1, etc., esp. when gathered for sacred purposes, Deut. 31:30; Josh. 8:35; etc.; in the N. T. thus in Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12. **3.** *any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance or tumultuously*; Acts 19:32, 41. **4.** in the Christian sense”
- b. The meaning of the English word “church”:
 - (1) I have supplied from three English dictionaries to show that the English word “church” was derived from the Greek word “kuriakon,” which comes from “kýrios” for Lord and “oikos” for house.
 - (2) Webster in his 1828 dictionary gives nine different meanings to the English word “church,” but the first definition is as follows: “A house consecrated to the worship of God, among Christians; the Lords house. This seems to be the original meaning of the word. The Greek, to call out or call together, denotes an assembly or collection. But, Lord, a term applied by the early Christians to Jesus Christ; and the house in which they worshipped was named from the title. So church goods, bona ecclesiastica; the Lords day, dies dominica.” *Sword Searcher*.
 - (3) Church, n. [Gr. *kuriakh*, or *kuriakon*; *kurij*, lord; A.S. *circe*, or *cyrice*; Dut. *kerk*; Ger. *kirche*; Sw. *kyrka*; Dan. *kirke*; Scotch *kirk*. This word appears to have been originally derived from the Greek, through the Anglo-Saxon. The Goths on the Lower Danube, as stated by Dr. Trench, were first converted to Christianity by Greek missionaries from Constantinople, who imparted to them the word *kuriakh* or *kuriakon*, *church*; and the Goths lent the word to other German tribes, including the Anglo-Saxons. “The passage,” says Dr. Trench, “most illustrative of the parentage of the word is from Walafrid Strabo

(about 840), who writes thus: ‘Ab ipsis autem Graecis *Kyrch* ... *Kyrios* – et alia multa accepimus. Sicut domus Dei Basilica, i.e. Regia ... Rege, sic etiam Kyrica, i.e. Dominica ... Domino nuncupatur.’”] – From Joseph E. Worcester's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1864, p. 241.

- (4) Church, n. [ME. *chirche*, *cherche*; A.S. *circe*, *cyrce*; Late Gr. *kyriakon*, a church, from Gr. *kyriake* (supply *doma*, house), the Lord's house, from *kyriakos*, belonging to the Lord or Master; *kyrios*, lord, master; *kyros*, supreme power, authority.] – From *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*, Unabridged-Second Edition, 1970, p. 324.
3. Why the Greek word “ekklēsia” was not translated and the English word “church” was used:
- King James would not allow some words to be translated. Note *Rules 3 and 4* which were given to the translators. “The third rule requires ‘the old ecclesiastical words to be kept,’ such as ‘church’ instead of ‘congregation.’ The fourth rule prescribes, that where a word has different meanings, that is to be preferred which has the general sanction of the most ancient Fathers, regard being had to ‘the propriety of the place, and the analogy of faith.’” *Translators Revived*, Alexander McClure, p. 67. (This why the Greek word “baptízō” was anglicized to “baptize” instead of being translated “immerse” or “dip.”)
 - William Tyndal properly translated “ekklēsia,” in his New Testament. He translated it *congregation* in every place. Tyndal’s translation of the New Testament was used heavily by the 1611 translators but King James I would not allow them to follow Tyndal with reference to this word. King James I, though a member of the Church of England, was a Roman Catholic at heart.
- B. Summary of the Greek word “ekklēsia” as found in the New Testament:
- The translators were not allowed to translate “ekklēsia” by order from King James I.
 - The English word *church* originated from the Greek word “kuriakon,” (from “kýrios” for Lord and “oikos” for house) which means *the Lord’s or the house of the Lord*.
 - The lexicons give the meaning of “ekklēsia” as *assembly*.
 - “Ekklēsia” had the meaning of *assembly* as far back as the time of Thucydides (423 B.C.). If the word always meant the same prior to New Testament times, where did it change in meaning in the New Testament? Jesus did not indicate that He was talking about anything different when He first used it in Matthew 16:18 and all other times He used it without question He was talking about an assembly or assemblies.
 - It is found 115 times in the Greek New Testament and in every place but three the translators supplied the English word “church.” The three exceptions are in Acts 19:32, 39, 40 and is translated properly as “assembly.”
 - Out of the 17 books in the N. T. where “ekklēsia” (*church*) is found, without question 10 always use the word to signify a local congregation or congregations.
 - Out of the 22 times the Lord used “ekklēsia,” without question, 21 times it means a local congregation or congregations.
 - John always used it as a local congregation(s).
 - James always used it as equating a local congregation.
 - Luke always used it depicting a local congregation or congregations.
 - Out of the 62 times listed under Paul’s usage, without question, 46 times it denotes a local congregation(s) [really it is 51 times without question].
 - Only one of the two times in Hebrews is it questioned.
 - Therefore, out of the 115 times “ekklēsia” is used in the N. T., at most only 17 times can it be questioned as to what it means. (In fact, I believe, the number is smaller than 17.)
- C. It is essential (I believe) that a study of the use of the word “body” and its connection to the congregation of God or the “ekklēsia” of Christ be considered. For more information regarding the use of the word “body” regarding the “ekklēsia” or “church,” see my larger outline regarding “The Church.”

1. The word that is translated *body* is the Greek word “sōma.” It is found 146 times in the N. T., and it is used in connection with the church 34 times. The other 112 times it refers to the human body.
2. There is another word translated *body* which refers to the church. It is found only 1 time in the N. T. – Eph. 3:6. It is “sýssōmos” and it is translated *of the same body*.
3. By studying the 35 times the word *body* is used in conjunction with the word *church*, it is seen that the word *body* cannot be used to describe something invisible, universal, provincial, national, etc., but only something visible and local.
4. It needs to be established what is meant by Christ being the head of the “church” or congregation.
 - a. It is commonly presented (depending on what is meant by “the church”) that the believers are “the body” with Christ being the “head” of that body.
 - (1) If this is the case, then “the body” is incomplete because it does not have an attached head: remember that it is claimed that “the church” is the body; Christ is the head.
 - (2) If the objection is raised that Christ is attached to “the body” then He is not a separate head, He simply a part of “the body.”
 - b. However, when studying this subject (particularly in I Corinthians 12 and in connection with Ephesians 5) we find that the congregation is “a body” (I Corinthians 12:27) with all its members, including “a head,” if you will.
 - (1) Since the body is complete then Christ is the head of that body like the husband is the head over the wife, cf. Ephesians 5:23.
 - (2) By this we see that the wife has a complete body (head and all other members or parts of the body) and so is the husband.
 - (3) However, the husband (a separate body) is head over the wife (a separate body). So likewise is Christ head over the congregation.
 - (4) Therefore, Christ is the head of each congregation or body. Just as Christ was he the head of the congregation (*a* body/*a* congregation, cf. 12:27) at Corinth, so likewise is Christ the head of each individual congregation. This must be kept in mind when giving the truth of such passages in Ephesians (especially the fifth chapter) and the first chapter of Colossians.
 - (5) Just as Christ is the head over each congregation, He is equally the head of each believer, Galatians 2:20.

II. THE QUESTIONABLE VERSES:

A. Matthew 16:18:

1. As previously stated, out of the 22 times (23 times if you identify Rev. 1:4 with Him instead of John) the Lord used “ekklēsia,” without question, 21 (22) times it means a local congregation or congregations. Why should this Greek word mean something different in Matthew 16:18? Why define it differently from the other 21 or 22 times? For better understanding, we may say that this is a generic “use” of the word.
2. Since “ekklēsia” had the meaning and was used to refer to an assembly or a congregation as far back as 423 B.C., why did the meaning change when Christ used it to describe His organization established to perform His kingdom work on earth in the last days of history?

B. Acts 20:28:

1. “Ekklēsia” is used in Acts twenty-four times and twenty-one times it is given the English word “church” and three times “assembly.”
2. Since all other verses it is used to designate a congregation or assembly, why should it mean something different in this verse?
3. The context of Acts 20:17-38 concerns elders or bishops from the congregation at Ephesus and Paul charges those ministers to feed the congregation (i.e., at Ephesus) over which the Holy Spirit appointed, ordained, or made them overseers.
4. When Paul said that the congregation at Ephesus was purchased by God with His own blood, He was not excluding other congregations nor was He excluding that the creation or earth would benefit from the redemptive work of Christ, cf. Romans 8:19-23. Likewise as implied earlier,

when Paul said that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him he (Paul) was not saying that Christ only died for him and not others.

C. As a side-note: Paul wrote Romans to several congregations in Rome (see the sixteenth chapter) and for this reason it was addressed “to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints,” and not as he addressed his letters to other congregations, cf. I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; etc.

D. I Corinthians:

1. “Ekklḗsía” is used twenty-two times in I Corinthians and only three times could it be questioned as to its meaning anything other than a congregation or an assembly. Why should these three times mean something other than the other nineteen times it is a congregation or congregations without question?
2. I Corinthians 10:32, “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”
3. I Corinthians 12:28, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”
 - a. Cf. 12:27: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” Literally, it should read “a body of Christ” and *not* “the body of Christ.”
 - b. The gifts are exercised or used in a congregation and cannot be used in something invisible, etc.
4. I Corinthians 15:9: “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”
 - a. This passage like other verses where Paul talks about persecuting “the church of God” must refer to congregations because he could not persecute anything mystical, invisible, universal, etc.
 - b. Paul always persecuted congregations. Cf. Acts 8:1, 3 (at Jerusalem); Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6.
 - c. Also, “ekklḗsía” is found nine times in II Corinthians and always refers to an assembly or assemblies. Why should we suppose God in His inspired letters to this assembly would have us to believe He meant something different in three places from the other twenty-eight times?

E. Ephesians:

1. Those who seek to believe that the Greek word “ekklḗsía” denotes something universal, invisible, etc. or something other than a congregation often go immediately to the epistle of Ephesians (along with Colossians) to support their position. While Colossians is equally divided (two and two) in the four times “ekklḗsía” is found in it, generally all nine verses in Ephesians are considered to be something other than a congregation by the universal, invisible believers.
 - a. It is strange that reading through the New Testament and of the sixty-four times we find the English word “church” found where the Greek word “ekklḗsía” is given and only four or five times can it be questioned that it described anything other than a congregation, that all of a sudden in the book of Ephesians it means something entirely different. (Acts 19:37 does not apply because the Greek word there is “hierósýlos” and means “a temple-despoiler.” *Sword Searcher*.)
 - b. Unless someone is trying to support a preconceived idea or view of what a “church” is, he would never think that God is directing the reader to believe something different regarding the use of the Greek word “ekklḗsía” or the English word “church.”
 - c. That there was a congregation in Ephesus cannot be questioned and it was to that congregation that this epistle is directed, cf. Acts 20:17, 28.
2. Ephesians 1:22-23, “And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
 - a. To understand the use of the English word “church” in verse twenty-two, we must also consider the word *body*.
 - b. The word *body* is found in Ephesians 10 times. In Eph. 5:28, it refers to the human body.

- c. While studying these verses, as previously stated, be mindful that Paul wrote to a congregation in the city of Ephesus. This is the same congregation which Paul said was purchased with the blood of God or Jesus Christ in Acts 20:28.
 - d. Acts 20:28 does not eliminate other congregations. Paul was only asserting a fact about this church at Ephesus. Likewise, in this epistle Paul was not excluding other assemblies, he was simply talking about or describing the congregation of Ephesus.
 - e. Paul, by the inspiration of God, was declaring the importance of the congregation to the Lord and God's ruling over all things to the benefit of the congregation of God.
 - f. Deuteronomy 32:7-9 declares that God ruled over the world ("all things" of Ephesians 1:22) for the benefit of His people Israel.
 - (1) Israel was where God manifested Himself in the Old Testament.
 - (2) Israel was the place where God established His public worship in the Old Testament.
 - (3) Likewise, today under the New Testament economy, God rules over all things for the benefit of where public worship is to be found. Cf. I Timothy 3:15, "... the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
 - g. In summation:
 - (1) The word for "church" (*ekklēsia*) is an assembly or congregation.
 - (2) The "church" or (*ekklēsia*) is a body, cf. I Corinthians 12:27 (lit. *a* body of Christ).
 - (3) A body of any sort is always local or tangible and not universal or invisible.
 - (4) Why should the meaning of "*ekklēsia*," and/or *body* change in meaning here? If "*ekklēsia*" always means the same prior to Ephesians, why should the meaning change in this book? Likewise, if "*ekklēsia*" always meant congregation prior to New Testament times, why should we believe the meaning changed when the New Testament was written?
 - (5) The church or the congregation is not the fullness in that it (the church) is universal. The fullness of Christ that is found in the congregation is derived from it (the congregation) being the "habitation of God through the Spirit," (Eph. 2:22). This does not mean that the fullness of God is not manifested elsewhere; it is simply saying that the fullness of God *is* manifested in the congregation of the Lord, the house of God.
 - (6) For emphasis: the fullness of Christ is found in His body, the congregation.
 - (7) By way of importance: any individual who degrades, undermines, belittles, or disdains the congregation of God degrades, etc., the fullness of Christ. Any person who does not desire to assemble with the local congregation, each and every time it meets, does not desire to know the fullness of Christ, nor go where that fullness is expressed or manifested.
3. Ephesians 3:10, 21, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," and "Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."
- a. These verses are reiterating the same truth as given in Ephesians 1:22-23.
 - b. Verse ten tells us that the heavenly hosts attend the worship of God in the congregation. See also I Corinthians 11:10.
 - c. Verse twenty-one continues to teach us that the glory of God is to be found in the "*ekklēsia*." This "*ekklēsia*" is the congregation, the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth now and, ultimately, it will be in the congregation of all the saints in glory. I Corinthians 11:26 teaches us that the "*ekklēsia*" will be on earth observing the Lord's Supper till Christ returns. The Lord's Supper is not practiced universally, invisibly, mystically, etc. It is to be done in the congregation of the Lord.
4. Ephesians 5:23-32:
- a. Given the meaning and use of the Greek word "*ekklēsia*" in the New Testament up to this point and as it is used in this epistle thus far, why should we believe that God would have us to think He means something different in these verses? We should always interpret unique passages in light of the clear and obvious meaning and use of the entire Bible or the individual book.

- b. Also, we are to bear in mind that when a doctrine is determined within the Scriptures that we are to define it by the clear teaching that is found the Word of God. Therefore, regarding the majority of verses that used the Greek word “ekklēsia” it is used without question to designate a congregation or congregations.
- c. As is commonly known, the first three chapters of Ephesians are essentially doctrinal and the last three chapters are basically devoted to practical godliness or as some would say, duty.
- d. One of the major themes in the last three chapters is unity within the body or congregation.
 - (1) The fourth chapter begins with this theme: v. 3, “keep the unity of the Spirit”; vs. 4-6, “one body”; “one Spirit”; “one hope of your calling”; “one Lord”; “one faith”; “one baptism”; and “one God.”
 - (2) Note this is spoken to a congregation and *not* to believers in general and definitely not to saints who have already died and are with the Lord in glory.
 - (3) Gifts were given to the congregation for unity: “unity of the faith,” for the “whole body” that is “joined together and compacted” edifies itself, vv. 8-16.
 - (4) In chapter five, the saints at Ephesus are told to speak to themselves in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” This is done in a congregation and not in some invisible, universal idea or concept.
- e. Ephesians 5:21-6:9 is prefaced with the idea of submission: husband and wife relationship; parent and children; servants and masters. Therefore, verses 23-32 are to be interpreted in light of this overall context.
- f. When studying verses 23-32, the overall idea is that of the husband/wife relationship as defined by the Lord and living in that setting for peace and unity. This begins with the wife being submissive to her husband as the congregation is submissive to the instructions of Christ.
 - (1) Obviously, this does not cover every situation in life because if the husband seeks to get the wife to submit to him in sin she must obey God, Acts 5:29.
 - (2) This is submission is that under the Lord, v. 21.
 - (3) The husband is to be submissive to the Lord and love his wife as Christ love and gave Himself for the believers in the congregation at Ephesus. Obviously, the Lord is not saying that He does not love other believers or congregations. He is simply stating the fact of His death for Ephesus.
 - (a) The Lord had an individual message for each congregation as recorded in chapters two and three in the book of Revelation.
 - (b) However, each congregation was to take heed to the message the Spirit had for all the congregations: “hear what the Spirit saith unto the “churches” or congregations.
 - (c) Likewise, the message given to the congregation at Ephesus in this epistle applies to other congregations, cf. Colossians 4:16.
 - (4) In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders/bishops of this same congregation that Christ died for this congregation. In saying this he was not excluding other congregations—he was only stating the truth for this assembly.

F. Colossians:

- 1. Colossians 1:18, 24: to avoid repeating what has been stated before, the truths previously presented (especially with reference to Ephesians) are applicable for the meaning of “ekklēsia” or the word “church” as mentioned in these verses.
- 2. Colossians 4:15, 16, without question is referring to a congregation.

G. Hebrews 12:22-23, The general assembly and church of the firstborn:

- 1. A difficult passage, but the obscure must be interpreted in light of the clear.
- 2. We have seen that “ekklēsia” according to definition and usage, means *assembly* or *congregation*. Why should it be different here? (Cf. Heb. 2:12, The only time it is recorded where Christ sang was the night He instituted the Lord’s supper with those He was assembled, Mt. 26:30.)
- 3. When studying the word *body* we find that the *body* of Christ is *one* (one in kind), and that it is a local congregation.

4. Some maintain that Heb. 12:22-23 refers to the worship in each congregation.
 - a. Angels attend the worship in each congregation, I Cor. 11:10; Eph. 3:10.
 - b. On the surface, this appears to be a valid interpretation.
5. A closer study (I believe) seems to indicate that this is referring to when all the redeemed are congregated together in glory.
 - a. *General assembly – panēgyris – a festal gathering of the whole people to celebrate public games or other solemnities; a public festal assembly.* – Thayer.
 - (1) From *pâs + ageirō*.
 - (a) *Pâs*, all, the whole, entire, etc.
 - (b) *Ageirō*, to bring together, to gather together, to put things together, etc.
 - (2) Quoting Trench: The *panhgurij* is different from “*ekklēsía*” in that “*ekklēsía*” denoted an assembly coming together for the transaction of business. The *panhgurij* on the other hand, was a solemn assembly for purposes of festal rejoicing; and on this account it is found joined continually with *eorth* [heortē], (See footnote 2 at the end of the document.) as by Philo, *Vit. Mos.* ii. 7; Ezek. xlvi. 11; cf. Hos. ii. 11; ix. 5; and Isai. lxvi. 10, where *panhgurizein = eortazein*: the word having given us ‘panegyric,’ which is properly a set discourse pronounced at one of these great festal gatherings. Business might grow out of the fact that such multitudes were assembled, since many, and for various reasons, would be glad to avail themselves of the gathering; but only in the same way as a ‘fair’ grew out of a ‘feria,’ a ‘holiday’ out of a ‘holy-day.’ ... Keeping this festal character of the *panhgurij* in mind, we shall find a peculiar fitness in the word’s employment at Heb. xii. 23, where only in the N. T. it occurs. The Apostle is there setting forth the communion of the Church militant on earth with the Church triumphant in heaven, – of the Church toiling and suffering here with that Church from which all weariness and toil have for ever passed away (Rev. xxi. 4); and how could he better describe this last than as a *panhgurij*, than as the glad and festal assembly of heaven? Trench’s *Synonyms*, pp. 6-7.
 - (3) See B. H. Carroll’s little book entitled *ECCLESIA*, pp. 44-46, for more information. It is **Appendix E** in my full outline on this subject.
 - b. What about *ye are come* in verse 22?
 - (1) *Prosérchomai* (perfect active indicative).
 - (2) From Dana and Mantey: As used at that time, the perfect tense denoted complete action. “Its basal significance is the progress of an act or state to a point of culmination and the existence of its finished results. That is, it views action as a finished product. Gildersleeve significantly remarks that it “looks at both ends of the action” It implies a process, but views that process as having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state. The point of completion is always antecedent to the time implied or stated in connection with the use of the perfect. ... In the indicative” (and it is so used in this passage) “the perfect signifies action as complete from the point of view of present time. Its exact meaning is often difficult to render, because of a blending of the sense with the English simple past.” After giving more explanations, Dana and Mantey state, “The significance of the perfect tense in presenting action as having reached its termination and existing in its finished results lies at the basis of its uses.” *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, pp. 200-201.

In short, the writer of Hebrews is standing in the present and viewing the future as having come to its culmination or completion. This is what some refer to as the “glory church” or the assembly of the whole family of God in glory. However, this is still a congregation or assembly.

This idea is not foreign to the Scriptures. Another example, though the verb tense is not the same in the Greek language, is Romans 8:30 where it is stated that the redeemed are “glorified.” Obviously, this will be materialized in the future, but Paul was writing (by divine inspiration) as if it was already completed. Other like examples could be given.

- c. From the context of the book of Hebrews this appears to be the interpretation.
- (1) The theme of Hebrews – *Better and Christ superior to the Old Testament.*
 - (2) Review chapters 1-7. Chapter 8:1, the summation.
 - (a) 8:1, in the heavens (cf. 8:6ff.).
 - (b) 9:11-12, a greater and more perfect tabernacle ...
 - (c) 9:22-28, v. 24, heaven itself.
v. 28, the second time.
 - (d) 10:11-13, cf. sat down ... till.
 - (e) 10:19-25, cf. enter the holiest; the day approaching.
 - (f) 10:32-37, cf. ye have in heaven; recompense of reward; he that shall come will come.
 - (g) 11:1, 10, 13-16, 35, (better resurrection).
 - (h) 12:1-17, Let us run to the end looking for the same and not be like Esau.
 - (3) Heb. 12:18-29.
 - (a) Verses 18-21, Ye are not to come to Sinai again; not to the old, but the new covenant.
 - (b) *Ye are come to Sion – the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.*
 - (i) Heb. 11:10, 16.
 - (ii) II Pet. 3:13.
 - (iii) Rev. 21:1-5, 10-11, 22ff.
 - (c) ... *to an innumerable company of angels.*
 - (i) Mt. 16:27; 25:31.
 - (ii) Rev. 19:14, cf. chapters 4 & 5.
 - (d) ... *general assembly and church of the **firstborn***, which are written in heaven.
 - (i) Lk. 10:20.
 - (ii) Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15.
 - (iii) Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28-29; 22:18, 30 (Till He comes.). Cf. the festal *Feast of Tabernacles* and Lk. 9:28-33. *Panēgyris* was used in the Septuagint to denote the three *festal* gatherings of Israel each year.
 - (e) ... *to God the **Judge*** of all.
 - (i) Cf. Ex. 24:9-11, 13.
 - (ii) Mt. 5:8.
 - (iii) Rev. 22:3-4a, 6a.
 - (iv) I Jn. 3:2.
 - (f) ... *spirit of just men made perfect* (the spirits are not *complete* until with the *body*.), I Thess. 4:14.
 - (g) *And to Jesus*, I Thess. 4:16-18; II Thess. 2:1.
 - (h) The great and notable day of His coming, vv. 25-29.
6. Therefore, the Hebrew saints are to live according to Heb. 13:10-16.
- a. Rom. 12:1-2, bodies a sacrifice, Heb. 13:10.
 - b. Heb. 13:15, sacrifice of praise.
 - c. Heb. 13:16, sacrifice of giving.

III. RELATIONSHIP OF “THE CHURCH” AND THE FAMILY OF GOD:

- A. While it is often stated, the phrase “family of God” is never found in the Scriptures. Obviously, this idea comes from Ephesians 3:15 where Paul wrote, “Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”
- B. The English word “family,” “families,” etc. is found 316 times in 238 verses and is found in the New Testament in Ephesians 3:15.
 1. The Greek word for “family” in this verse is “*patria*” and carries the idea or meaning of *paternal descent, i.e. (concretely) a group of families or a whole race (nation):—family, kindred, lineage. Sword Searcher Bible Program.*
 2. This Greek word is found two other times in the New Testament:

- a. Luke 2:4, “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:).” The word is “lineage.”
 - b. Acts 3:25, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” The word is “kindred.”
3. I believe it is safe to say that since God is the Father of the redeemed (the elect, sheep, believers, etc.) and Christ is their elder Brother, the “family of God” (“whole family in heaven and earth”) is the term that should be used in referring to the people of God and not the English word “church.”
- C. The idea of a “universal” or “invisible church” is confusing in itself because different people mean different things when using these terms. Here is a sample of the different ideas that are meant by those who profess such a doctrine: the elect of God; all believers alive on earth at one time; all believers from Pentecost to the second coming of Christ; a mystical church of the saints currently in glory with God; Christendom; and the list can go on. Therefore, I believe it should be avoided.
 - D. I believe that the closest idea that the word “family” might be used to have some idea or connection with the “*ekklēsia*” in the New Testament is in II Samuel 23:5, “Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.” However, I believe it can be rightly said that to equate this verse with the assembly of the saints is a violation of hermeneutics or scriptural interpretation.
 - E. In conclusion, I think it is best to use this verse or the phrase “the family of God” when speaking of all of the people of God and to use congregation when referring to the house of God and avoid the use of the word “church” altogether to avoid confusion.

IV. RELATIONSHIP OF “THE CHURCH” AND THE KINGDOM:

- A. First allow me to say that I believe that the phrases the “kingdom of God,” “kingdom of heaven,” “kingdom of Christ and of God,” “kingdom of His dear Son,” and other such like phrases are referring to the same thing. See Mt. 19:23-24.
 1. Matthew 4:17 says “kingdom of heaven; Mark 1:15 says “kingdom of God.” Both verses are talking about Jesus preaching after John was cast into prison.
 2. Matthew 5:3 says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Luke 6:20 states, “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.”
 3. Ephesians 5:5 compared with Revelation 11:15: “ ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” “...The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ ...”
 4. Many more such examples could be given, but this should be sufficient to prove that they are the same thing.
- B. Many think that the kingdom and “the church” (the congregation) are referring to the same thing. They are not the same thing.
 1. The Greek word for “church” is “*ekklēsia*” properly means *a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly*. As shown above it is an assembly or congregation.
 2. The Greek word for kingdom is “*basileia*” and a short definition is given as *rule, or (concretely) a realm (literally or figuratively)* and translated as kingdom, reign, etc.
 3. “The *primary* meaning of both the Hebrew word *makluth* in the Old Testament and of the Greek word *basileia* in the New Testament is the rank, authority and sovereignty exercised by a king.” *The Gospel of the Kingdom* by George Eldon Ladd, p. 19.
 4. While the “*ekklēsia*” has officers (elder/bishop and deacon), they are not to rule as a king with sovereign powers.
- C. Aspects of the kingdom as seen in the New Testament:
 1. It is a present reality: “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” Romans 14:17.

2. It is an inheritance: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” Matthew 25:34.
 3. Saints are placed in the kingdom: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son,” Colossians 1:13
 4. That the kingdom is a future event: “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” II Peter 1:11.
 - a. “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,” Matthew 8:11.
 - b. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ... Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” Matthew 13:41, 43.
 5. The kingdom did not come with signs and observations: “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you,” Luke 17:20-21.
 - a. Allow me to comment here by saying that I do not believe that Jesus was telling the Pharisees that the kingdom was in them.
 - b. I believe He was simply saying that the kingdom (the king) was standing in the middle of them and they didn’t know it.
 6. Many other comparisons could be supplied to clearly show that the kingdom (*basileía*) and the congregation (*ekklēsia*) are not the same.
- D. Meaning of the kingdom:
1. A definition that I have used to give an overall meaning of the kingdom is as follows: “The kingdom of God is the sovereign rule of God, manifested in the person and work of Christ, creating a people over whom He reigns, and issuing (emerging, resulting, proceeding, etc.) in a realm or realms in which the power of His reign is realized.” George Eldon Ladd.
 2. A short definition might be: “The sovereign rule of God.” However, this is somewhat lacking because, in reality, there cannot be a ruler without a realm or domain over which the ruler resides.
 3. We have previously seen that the kingdom is manifested in many different ways and it would be a tremendous task to do a comprehensive study of the it. In fact, the words “kingdom” and “kingdoms” are found 399 times in 369 verses and in the past few weeks I worked my way through all of the verses and have them listed and categorized in an Excel spreadsheet to seeking to know more fully about this English word as found in the Scriptures. Obviously, the study will be expanded as one works his way through the Hebrew and Greek words for “kingdom.” However, in summary regarding the New Testament, kingdom is always translated from the Greek word *basileía*. Two times kingdom was added by the translators and one time *basileía* is translated reigneth. There are five Hebrew words translated kingdom.
 4. To prevent this study from being too lengthy, allow me to say that I believe it can safely be said that the “kingdom” and the “congregation” (“church”) are not the same thing.
 5. However, in summary:
 - a. The congregation is *in* the kingdom.
 - b. The congregation is the highest and most glorious aspect of the kingdom in this age.
 - c. The congregation is used to advance the kingdom.

Jimmy Barber
December, 2020