

# A Study of the Church in the New Testament

## Lesson 2: How The Bible Uses The Word “Church”

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### I. Introduction

- A. Some reasons concerning why there are so many beliefs, even though we have the same “pattern” or “blueprint” for our life from our God.
  - 1. Sometimes, emotions or feelings are the standard, and NOT the Word of God (*see Acts 26:9, 10*)
  - 2. Sometimes religions teach that the Word of God is NOT the only “pattern.”
  - 3. Sometimes tradition is accepted as a “standard” (*Matthew 15:1-14*).
  - 4. One major reason is the error of the partial view, where people see only PART of God’s Word on a topic. See the illustration of “The Blind Men and the Elephant.”
  - 5. Please note the problem of “selective obedience,” that is, just picking and choosing what WE want to believe and practice in religion, and not finding what the Lord in His Word wants us to do (*Luke 6:46*).
- B. The word for “church” in the New Testament Greek is “*ekklesia*.” This is similar to the Spanish word “*iglesia*.”
  - 1. Language scholars believe that the English word “church” may come from a German word, “*kirche*” or “*kerk*,” and that these German words may go back to the Greek word “*kuriakos*,” which means “belonging to the Lord.” This would be an incredible description of the church! We will see a great similarity in this definition and New Testament teaching.
  - 2. In our study below, we will examine how the Greek word “*ekklesia*” is used in the Bible, both Old and New Testament.
  - 3. We will also see one fact that is usually not well known. The word “church” was well known in the physical world of the days of Jesus and the first century Christians. Please see below.

### II. How the Word “Church” Was Used in the Physical World of the Days of Jesus and the First Century Christians

- A. It was very commonly used of the meetings of the citizens of a certain city such as the city of Athens, Corinth, or Ephesus. When these citizens met together, they were called an “*ekklesia*.”

- B. For example, the word “*ekklesia*” was used of the citizens of Ephesus when they met together in an “assembly” (*Acts 19: 32, 39, 41*).
  - 1. The “assembly” was in confusion. This is the word “*ekklesia*” (church) (*Acts 19:32*).
  - 2. There was a “regular assembly,” a regular “*ekklesia*” (church) (*Acts 19:39*).
  - 3. The town clerk dismissed the “assembly,” the “*ekklesia*” (church) (*Acts 19:41*).
- C. Therefore, one very important meaning of the word is “a group of citizens.”
- D. The word “*ekklesia*” also means “the called out,” people called out of their homes.

### III. How the Word “Church” is Used in the Old Testament

- A. The word “church” (*ekklesia*) is used about 100 times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.
- B. It is translated from the Hebrew word meaning “to summon” (*Deuteronomy 18:16; Judges 20:2*).
- C. It is used for:
  - 1. All the assembly of Israel (*1Kings 8:14*)
  - 2. Assembly of Judah (*2Chronicles 20:5; 30:25*)
  - 3. Assembly of the saints (*Psalms 149:1*)
  - 4. Assembly of the Lord (*Deuteronomy 23:2, 3, 8; 1Chronicles 28:8; Micah 2:5*)

### IV. How the Word “Church” is Used in the New Testament

- A. As God’s “called out” people
  - 1. Disciples chosen out of the world (*John 15:19*)
  - 2. People delivered out of darkness into the kingdom (*Colossians 1:13*)
  - 3. People turned from darkness to light (*Acts 26:16-18*)
- B. The “church” is also a group of CITIZENS who belong to the Lord!
  - 1. “A holy nation” (*1Peter 2:9*)
  - 2. A kingdom of citizens with a heavenly citizenship (*Philippians 3:20, 21*)
  - 3. They BELONG to Jesus, for He purchased the church (*Ephesians 5:25*)

**Please Note: The term “*ekklesia*” (church) of Christ is NOT a title, but rather a term that means the “CITIZENS OF CHRIST.” Jesus owns them!**

- C. The Lord “places” people in His church!
  - 1. The Lord ADDS to His “*ekklesia*,” His church (*Acts 2:41, 47*)
  - 2. The Lord TRANSFERS people into His kingdom (*Colossians 1:13*)

3. People are “added to the Lord” (*Acts 5:14*)

## **Important Study Questions**

1. What is the meaning of “Upon this rock, I will build my church?” (*Matthew 16:18*)
2. Was the church begun by human beings?
3. From our study above, what is the church?
4. From our study above, does Jesus want His church to be divided?
5. Is the Lord’s church really a denomination, or a sect?