



LESSON 10

CHURCH vs. ECCLESIA

CONFUSION OF TERMS

Confusion is epidemic within the church world. One of the worst mix-ups has to do with the use of the terms “**church**” and “**ecclesia**.” In fact, the vast majority of people today are not even aware of the term **ecclesia**, and do not have the slightest idea what it means. There are a few who recognize both terms, but most of them assume both terms are synonymous.

In this lesson we’ll see that there is a critical difference between the two terms. It is vital that we understand this critical difference if we are to understand Christ’s message about his Kingship.

The confusion has been caused by intentional mistranslation of Holy Scripture. Churches have misguided people concerning the English word **church**, and have kept people ignorant of the meaning of the word **ecclesia**. This lesson will examine the origins and meanings of the words **church** and **ecclesia** and demonstrate the difference between them. Once these two terms are understood, the Scriptures will take on their intended meaning.

MODERN DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

CHURCH: 1. The company of all Christians regarded as a mystical spiritual body. 2. A building for public worship. 3. A congregation. 4. Public divine worship in a church: a religious service. 5. A specified Christian denomination. 6. Ecclesiastical power as distinguished from the secular. 7. The clerical profession.

ECCLESIA: 1. The political assembly of citizens of an ancient Greek state. 2. A church or congregation.

The above definitions are taken from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. Note that the word **ecclesia** is defined as a “church” and both **church** and **ecclesia** are defined as a “congregation.” This is a perfect example of how the terms **church** and **ecclesia** are both used interchangeably and considered by most to refer to the same thing. However, as we shall see, the terms are not synonymous. Rather, they are quite distinctive in meaning and are derived from different origins.

I often ponder the cognitive dissonance that results from an organization that calls itself a church but does not know, and cannot explain, what a church is.

WORD ORIGINS

CHURCH

Greek **KURIAKOS**: (adjective) lord-like. From **KURIOS**: lord. Old English **CIRCE**; Germanic **KIRKE**; Scottish **KIRK**.

ECCLESIA

Greek **EKKLESIA**: (noun) the called-out (those summoned); from **EK**: out + **KALEO**: to call. Thus, **THOSE WHO ARE CALLED OUT**.

Notice the distinctive differences between the two Greek source words **kuriakos** (lordly or lord-like), and **ekklesia** (the called-out). Both words are in modern English language. They are listed in English dictionaries. Yet today, these two words – **church** and **ecclesia** – are commonly used as synonyms. As we shall see, Bible translators wrongly translated the Greek word **ekklesia** into the English word **church**. This mistranslation has caused millions of English-speaking people to stumble at key verses of Scripture.

CHURCH

"[Saxon CIRCE, CIRC, or CYRIC; Scots, KIRK; German KIRCHE; Swedish KYRCKIA; Danish KIRKE; Greek KURIAKON: a temple of God; from kuriakos: pertaining to a Lord, or to our Lord Jesus Christ: from KURIOS: a Lord (Russian tzerkov)] A house consecrated to the worship of God among Christians; i.e., the Lord's house. This seems to be the original meaning of the word. The Greek EKKLESIA, from EKKALEO: to call out or call together, denotes an assembly or collection. But KURIAKOS, KURIAKON, are from KURIOS: Lord, a term applied by the early Christians to Jesus Christ; and the house in which they worshipped was named from that title."

Webster's 1828 Dictionary

In the above quote we can see some of the differences between the Greek words **kuriakos** and **ekklesia**. "**Kuriakos**" evolved into "**church**" and came to mean a lord's possession (any possession of any lord). But **ecclesia** refers to a body of people called out (separated). These are two separate and distinct concepts, and it is wrong to replace one with the other, or use them as if they were synonymous.

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS AND USAGES

As previously noted, the English word **church** (meaning "lord-like") comes from the Greek word **kuriakos**. The root word "kurios" means "a lord." Thus, **kuriakos** is an adjective describing something or someone that is "**lordly**."

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. 1 Corinthians 11:20 states: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the _____ supper.
2. John says in Revelation 1:10 that he was in the spirit on the _____ day.

The preceding verses illustrate the use of the word **kuriakos**. These are the only occurrences of this Greek word in the New Testament. In both cases the *KJV* translators wrongly chose the word “lord’s” instead of “lordly” or “lord-like.” For it to be “Lord’s” the Greek word would need to be in the genitive case, which it is not. Rather, it is in the accusative case, and therefore is correctly rendered “lordly” or “lord-like.” The churches eventually decided they wanted it to refer to a house of worship as if it meant “the lord’s house” – thus, a “church.” The English word “church” is the eventual form of the Greek word **kuriakos**. However, to replace the word **ecclesia** with **church** breaks every rule of translation.

ECCLESIA

The English word “ecclesia” comes from the Greek word **ekklesia** meaning “the called-out.” It is derived from the Greek words **ek** (out) and **kaleo** (to call). Thus, an **ecclesia** is a group or body of people “called out” for a particular purpose.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 19:23-41.

1. According to verse 25, Demetrius “_____ together” a group of silversmiths.
2. In verses 32 and 41 this group of people is referred to as an _____.
3. In verse 39 the town clerk (recorder; town officer) told the group that the matter should be brought before a “lawful _____.”

In the above verses 32, 39, and 41 the *KJV* word “assembly” is translated from the Greek word **ekklesia**: the same Greek word **usually translated “church”** in other places in the *KJV*. Notice that these people were “called together” (verse 25). This illustrates the general meaning of an “ecclesia” - a group or body of people called out for some particular purpose. In this case, the purpose was to deal with a civil matter (Paul was exposing the false worship of the pagan goddess Diana and was hurting the silversmiths’ market for idols). Notice also that this ecclesia mob was considered “unlawful” since the town-clerk told them to take the matter before a “lawful” **ecclesia**. This suggests that **ecclesias** could be formal governmental bodies called out, as well as mobs that were not official – both were “called together.”

In the above passage of Scripture, notice how the translators used the English word “assembly” in translating the Greek word **ekklesia**. Why didn’t they use their favorite word “church” as they did in other occurrences of the Greek word **ekklesia**? Obviously, their idea of “church” did not fit the context of these passages. Thus, every New Testament occurrence of the Greek word **ekklesia** needs scrutiny.

GREEK ECCLESIAS

A study of Greek culture will reveal that the Greeks referred to governmental assemblies as “ecclesias.” Governmental bodies (ecclesias) were called-out groups. Recall that the dictionary definition of “ecclesia” made reference to a “political assembly of citizens.” These Greek ecclesias were composed of Greek citizens selected (called-out) for civil duty. The term “ecclesia” could apply to both informal and formal bodies of various sizes. They were often used for governmental (political) purposes. An ecclesia could be, and has been, described as a “body politic.” This definition perfectly fits the body of people “called-out” by Jesus. This concept is quite different from the modern-day idea of “church.”

CHRISTIAN ECCLESIAS

Now that we have a basic idea of the “ecclesia” concept, we will next examine its use in the New Testament to discover its Christian application.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Acts 7:38 Stephen states that Moses “... was in the _____ in the wilderness” where he received the living words (commandments) from God at mount Sinai.
2. In the above verse, the word “church” is translated from what Greek word? _____

God gave Moses laws and directions to organize a nation ... not a “church.” Why then did the translators use that word? Moses was part of a new body politic that organized a nation or family that was “called out” from Egyptian bondage. The Greek word **ekklesia** was used to describe that body of people of which Moses was a part.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Exodus 19:1-8.

3. Verse 1 indicates Israel, after leaving Egypt, came into the _____ of Sinai.
4. According to verses 5 and 6 God told the Israel people that if they would obey Him, they would be to Him a “peculiar _____” above all people and would also be a “_____ of priests” and a “holy _____.”
5. In Deuteronomy 7:6 the children of Israel are told, “Thou art a holy [separate; set apart] people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath _____ thee to be a _____ people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the earth.”
6. Psalms 135:4 states, “For the Lord hath _____ Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His _____ treasure.”

The verses above clearly illustrate that God chose (called out) Israel of all the families of the earth for a special purpose. He “called them out” from the world to be a “holy” nation. In Hebrew the word translated as “holy” means “separate” or “set apart.” In Acts 7:38, Stephen states that Moses was in this special body politic. The writer of Acts used the Greek word **ekklesia** to describe that body. It should have been accurately rendered “ecclesia” instead of “church.” Had the Greek word **kuriakon** been used, “church” would have been an accurate translation. However, to translate **ekklesia** into “church” is both inaccurate and misleading.

Israel was a special, chosen people ... a large ecclesia ... not due to their genetics, but due to their faith after the model set by their father Abraham. When they lost faith, they lost their nation and covenant, and they went into captivity. From then on, God dealt with them as individuals, but not as a nation.

ECCLESIA = BODY

We have seen that an ecclesia refers to a body of individuals that have been “called out” for some purpose. New Testament Scripture substantiates this connection between “ecclesia” and “body.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. According to Colossians 1:18, Jesus is the head of the _____, the _____.
2. Ephesians 1:22-23 states that God has put all things under Jesus’ feet and gave Him [Jesus] to be the “head” over all things to the _____, which is His _____.
3. Ephesians 5:23 indicates that Christ is _____ of the **ecclesia** (not “church”) and _____ of the **body**.

In Colossians 1:18 it is clear that the **ecclesia** is a “**body politic**” comprised of those who are raised from the dead with Jesus as the head of that body. “Body” in this context refers to a called-out people with Jesus Christ as their head. These verses are not referring to a “church” organization of some kind, or a building, or a physical temple. Like Israel of old, the “body” is not defined by genetics, but by faith.

Additional Scriptures give more information concerning this body – the **ecclesia**.

BODY

The word **body** is translated from the Greek word **soma**, meaning either a single body or a large or small number of individuals belonging to one society or family.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 12:1-8.

4. In verse 1 Paul is addressing the _____ (those residing at Rome).
5. In verse 5 Paul states, “So we [including Paul], being _____ are one _____ in Christ, and every one members one of another.”
6. Verse 6 then explains how the members of this body have different _____ according to the grace that is given to them and the proportion of _____.

Notice how the body consists of many brethren who are “members one of another.” Notice also that various abilities are distributed among these members, examples of which are listed in verses 6-8. This same concept is referred to in other passages of Scripture, as we will see.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Corinthians 12.

1. In verse 1 Paul is addressing the _____ (in Corinth) “concerning the spiritual (things).”
2. In verse 12 Paul compares Christ to a _____ with many _____.
3. In verse 13 Paul states that “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one _____”
4. After describing the human body and its various members (verses 14-26), Paul states in verse 27, “Now ye [the brethren] are the body of _____ and members in _____.”
5. Verse 28 then explains that some in the _____ have been set (placed or appointed) by God to perform various functions. (Compare with Ephesians 4:11)

The above verses explain the “body” of Christ by comparing it to the human body with its various parts, each with its own particular function for the overall workings of the body in general. Together the brethren make up the body (ecclesia) of Christ (verse 27), and verse 28 indicates that each member in the **ecclesia** has abilities and responsibilities (apostles, prophets, teachers, etc.). Take note of how the members of the “body of Christ” are the members of the **ecclesia**.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Ephesians 5:21-33.

6. According to verse 23, _____ is the head [lord] of the **ecclesia**.
7. Verse 24 states the **ecclesia** is _____ unto [subordinate to] Christ.
8. Verse 25 says Christ _____ the **ecclesia** and _____ Himself for it.
9. According to verse 26, Christ _____ and _____ the **ecclesia** with the washing of water by the word.
10. Verse 27 indicates the ecclesia is glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, but _____ and without _____.
11. Verse 29 states that the Lord _____ and _____ the **ecclesia**.
12. According to verse 30, “For we are _____ of His [Christ’s] _____”
13. Verse 32 indicates Paul was speaking about Christ and the _____.

The preceding verses describe the ecclesia (Christ's body; the called-out and separated ones) by comparing it to a husband-wife relationship. In the comparison we are given some descriptive characteristics of the ecclesia which should help us to identify it. Notice, we are using the correct word "ecclesia" instead of the wrong word "church."

ECCLESIA = FLOCK (SHEEP)

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 20:17-35.

1. According to verse 17, Paul "sent to Ephesus, and called the _____ of the ecclesia."
2. In verse 28 Paul admonishes the elders to take heed to themselves and to all the _____ over the which the holy spirit sets you as overseers, to feed the ecclesia of God, which He _____ through the blood of his own (Son) (correct translation).
(Compare with Ephesians 5:25)
3. Verse 29 identifies the object of Paul's warning: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves [false teachers] enter among you, not sparing the _____."
(Compare with Ezekiel 22:27 and Matthew 7:15)

The verses above describe the "ecclesia of God" as the **flock**. The elders (serving as overseers) were to "feed" the ecclesia (feed the flock, i.e. sheep) and protect them from false teaching (verse 30). Recall how lesson five identified the flock – the sheep that hear Jesus' voice and follow Him. The ecclesia, then, consists of Christ's sheep – those that are called out and separated by hearing the gospel of the Kingship of Christ. It is important to note that the word "elders" does not refer to "positions" or "offices" in some "church" organization. Rather, it refers to older, respected men who are trustworthy leaders.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. 1 Corinthians 1:2 states that Paul is writing to the **ecclesia** of God in Corinth, "to them that are _____ in Christ Jesus, **called** to be _____ . . ."
5. According to 2 Corinthians 1:1, Paul is writing to the ecclesia of God which is at Corinth, with all the _____ which are in all _____ .

According to the above verses, those that were of the ecclesia in Corinth were separated (compare with Ephesians 5:26) and called-out to be "saints" (Greek: separate ones). Not only were there saints in Corinth, but they were all throughout the area of Achaia. That suggests there were other ecclesias in addition to the one in Corinth, and that they were made up of individuals called "saints."

MORE ECCLESIAS AND SAINTS

Scriptures make it clear that ecclesias of saints (separated ones) existed beyond the city of Corinth and the area of Achaia.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Galatians 1:1-6.

1. Verse 2 indicates Paul is writing to the **ecclesia** in _____ .
2. In verse 4 Paul says to this ecclesia that Jesus gave Himself for our sins, “that he might deliver [take out] us from this present evil _____ . . .”
3. Verse 6 indicates they had been “**called** into the _____ of Christ.”

Here we see that the members of the ecclesia in Galatia were called out from the Babylonian mindset and its system of society and religion. They were being called into the freedom of Christ.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Ephesians 1:1-4.

4. Verse 1 indicates Paul is writing to the _____ which are at Ephesus and to the _____ in Christ Jesus.
 5. Paul tells them in verse 4 that they have been **chosen** to be _____ and without _____ . (Compare with Ephesians 5:27)
 6. Philippians 1:1 states that Paul is writing to the **saints** at _____ .
 7. Colossians 1:2 indicates Paul is writing to the **saints** and faithful _____ in Christ which are at Colossae.
- #### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-4.
8. Verse 1 says that Paul is writing to the **ecclesia** of the _____ .
 9. Verse 4 speaks of their _____ of (by) God.

It is obvious that New Testament letters were usually written to ecclesias whose members were addressed as “saints.” The word “saints” is translated from the Greek word **hagios** meaning “separate.” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* indicates this word means “set apart for God.” Literally, “saints” are “holy ones” or “separated ones” – those “set apart” from the system of men. They are also referred to in Scripture as “chosen” and “elect.” These are the members of Christ’s body – the ecclesia. It could also be called the “Christian community” or “body of Christians.”

PERSECUTION OF THE ECCLESIA

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 8:1-3.

1. According to verse 1, there was a great _____ against the ecclesia which was at Jerusalem.
2. Verse 3 states that Saul made havoc of [laid waste; ravaged] the ecclesia, entering into every _____, and haling men and women committed them to _____.
3. In Acts 9:1 Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the _____ of the Lord.
4. Concerning Saul, Ananias answered the Lord in Acts 9:13, "I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy _____ at Jerusalem."

The above verses show that Saul persecuted the **ecclesia** at Jerusalem and the **saints** there. We also read that he persecuted the **disciples** (followers) of Jesus. This indicates that the students (disciples) of Jesus were known as the "saints," and they were part of the **ecclesia**. They were not members of some "church organization." Rather, they were members of free societies – **Christian communities of believers** that had been "called out" of the corrupt Babylonian world system (centralized government) into the liberty and freedom of the government (kingship) of God under the reign of Jesus. Because these Christians promoted a different government and acknowledged and obeyed a different King, the Roman/Judean system persecuted them (Acts 12:1) – just as it does today. The persecution wasn't because of *religion* – it was because of *government*.

Notice how Saul went into people's homes to persecute the ecclesia. He didn't go to synagogues or churches to find ecclesias. Ecclesias were found in homes (1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2), referring to saints who lived there or met there. The ecclesia was not a *place* of meeting, but instead it was the **people** who were called out. Neither was it some structured "organization" in which they had membership. Ecclesias existed from Jerusalem to Rome. In fact, Paul established several of them during his travels (Acts 16:5). He also revisited several of them, and wrote to them. These were not "church organizations" or "church buildings." These were followers of Christ who were called out to be separate from the Babylonian-type culture devised by men.

SAUL'S PERSECUTION OF JESUS

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 9:1-5.

5. As Saul was going to Damascus to apprehend Christians, verse 4 states he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul why _____ thou me?"
6. Verse 5 identifies who was speaking to Saul: "I am _____ whom thou persecutest ..."

According to the above verses, Saul's persecution of Jesus' disciples (the saints comprising the ecclesia) was equivalent to persecuting Jesus Himself. This is additional proof that the ecclesia is the "body of Christ."

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN ECCLESIAS

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 16:13-20.

1. In verse 18 Jesus says, "upon this rock [the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God] I will _____ my **ecclesia**."

Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

2. Speaking to the ecclesia (the saints) at Ephesus, Paul states in verse 12 that prior to their rebirth (see vs.5-10) they were " _____ from the **commonwealth** [citizenship; community] of Israel, and _____ from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."
3. In verse 19 Paul tells them that through Christ they are now "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow _____ with the **saints**, and of the _____ of God."
4. Verse 21 describes this "household" as a " _____ fitly framed together" that "groweth unto a holy _____ in the Lord."
5. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul tells the brethren they are the _____ of God.
6. In 1 Peter 1:1-2 he writes to the scattered "elect." In 2:5 Peter tells them, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual _____, a holy _____ . . ."

Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

7. In verse 9 he tells them, "Ye are a _____ generation, a royal **priesthood**, a holy **nation**, a **peculiar** people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath _____ you _____ of darkness into His marvelous light.
(Compare with Exodus 19:5-6.)

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this lesson that the terms "ecclesia" and "church" are not equivalent terms. They are separate and distinct concepts. Attempting to use them interchangeably is misleading and wrong. Because of faulty translation and teaching, most truth seekers start by looking to a church and mistake it for the "body" of Christ. As a result, they are led away and confused about the true purpose and essence of Christ's Body - his ecclesia - those who are "called-out" to freedom. Churches are creations of the state designed to deceive and pacify the masses and prevent them from finding the true nature of Christ's work. Thus, churchgoers are being programmed for slavery.

Churchgoers mistakenly believe that Christ and His apostles were hated and persecuted because they started churches. But neither Rome, nor the Jews, would have taken notice of just another religion. In fact they were persecuted because of their beliefs regarding "government" (i.e., The Reign of Christ). But "ecclesias" are not churches; they are bodies of "called-out" Christians who look only to God for law, and to Christ as their only King. When "ecclesia" is understood and recognized, and the term "church" is exposed and discredited, the Scriptures take on new meaning. (More on "ecclesias" later.)



LESSON 10

CHURCH vs. ECCLESIA

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1. lord's (should be "lordly supper")
2. lord's (should be "lordly day")

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1. called
2. assembly
3. assembly

Page 94

1. *KJV* has "church" (actually is "ecclesia")
2. ekklesia or ecclesia
3. wilderness
4. treasure; kingdom; nation
5. chosen; special
6. chosen; peculiar

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1. body; ecclesia
2. ecclesia; body
3. head; savior
4. brethren
5. many; body
6. gifts (abilities); faith

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1. brethren
2. body; members
3. body

Page 96 (continued)

4. Christ; particular (Greek: in part)
5. ecclesia (not "church")
6. Christ
7. subject
8. loves; gives (correct verb tense)
9. sanctifies (Greek: separates); cleanses (correct verb tense)
10. holy; blemish
11. nourishes; cherishes
12. members; body
13. ecclesia (His body)

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1. elders (meaning "older")
2. flock; purchased (Greek: fully possesses)
3. flock
4. sanctified (separated); saints (separate)
5. saints; Achaia (a Roman province)

Page 98

1. Galatia
2. world (Greek: system)
3. grace
4. saints; faithful
5. holy (separate); blame
6. Philippi
7. brethren
8. Thessalonians
9. election (i.e., calling)

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1. persection
2. house; prison
3. disciples
4. saints
5. persecutest
6. Jesus

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1. build
2. aliens; strangers
3. citizens; household
4. building; temple
5. temple
6. house; priesthood
7. chosen; called; out

NOTES