

The Christian Assembly

4Winds Fellowships

- I. The Greek word translated “church” is ἐκκλησία (ek-lay-see'-a)
- A. It appears 112 times in the NT
 - B. Translated “church” 73 times (NKJV)
 - C. Trans. “assembly” or “congregation” 39 times
 - D. Other terms used in the NT for a Christian ἐκκλησία:
 - 1. The Temple of God
 - 2. The House of God
 - 3. The Body of Christ
- II. Etymology: (history, composition, and development of a word)
- A. ἐκκλησία is a compound word:
 - 1. ἐκ (preposition): out of, out from among
 - 2. καλέω (kal-lay'-O) - (verb): call, invite, summon
 - 3. These two words when combined are used as a noun
 - B. Meaning of the noun ἐκκλησία:
 - 1. Literally: “a called-out assembly”
 - 2. ἐκκλησία implies the following:
 - a. an invitation
 - b. willfully responding to the invitation or call
 - c. gathering for a specific event
 - d. being present at the same time and location
 - 3. ἐκκλησία was used of the first Christian gathering which consisted of the 120 who had been gathered together in one place in the upper room (Acts 1:14-15; Acts 2:1), to which the Lord then added daily (in Acts 2:47).
 - 4. The meaning of ἐκκλησία was later expanded to include all of the baptized believers in a specific city or location even though they were too numerous to all meet in the same building at the same time, meeting from house to house (Acts 2:46; Acts 5:11; Acts 8:1,3).
 - 5. At other times ἐκκλησία was used specifically of the assembled gathering (Acts 11:22,26).
 - C. ἐκκλησία appears 60 times in the OT (LXX)
 - D. It is never translated “church” in the Old Testament – WHY? (Acts 7:38 KJV)
- III. ἐκκλησία in the OT (LXX) sets the precedent for usage in the New Testament.
- A. The original ἐκκλησία at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:1 – 20:24; Deut. 9:10; Deut. 10:4; Deut. 18:15-16; Acts 7:38 KJV)

1. Ex. 19-20: dress for occasion; meet with God; 10 commandments spoken by God in the hearing of the assembly, too frightening for the people.
 2. Deut. 9:10 & 10:4: this event called “the day of the assembly”
 3. Deut. 18:15-19 God would send another PROPHET (Jesus) in response to their request not to hear directly from God out of heaven.
- B. The ἐκκλησία at David’s commissioning the construction of the “House of God” (1 Chron. 28:1-10,19-21; 29:1-22)
1. The Temple to be a “footstool” for God (28:2)
 2. The “assembly” ἐκκλησία in the “hearing of our God” (28:8)
 3. Willing offerings & great rejoicing (29:9,14)
 4. Celebration with feasting (29:22)
- C. The ἐκκλησία at Solomon’s dedication of God’s House (2 Chron. 6:12-7:11)
1. God cannot be contained in a place (6:18)
 2. God’s attention toward His “Temple” where He placed His Name, help there in time of need, forgiveness (20-31)
 3. God’s presence manifested (7:1-3)
- D. The ἐκκλησία of Hezekiah who cleansed the Temple for Passover (2 Chron. 29:1-11,15-17,25-31; 30:1-27)
1. Repentance and restoration of the “House of the Lord” (vss. 1-17)
 2. Music and praise (vss. 25-30)
 3. Willing thank offerings (vs. 31)
 4. An invitation for greatest Passover at the Lord’s House (7:1-5, 13-26)
 5. Their prayers were heard in heaven (v. 27)
- E. The ἐκκλησία on Rosh Hashanna & Sukkot after the 70-year Babylonian exile (Neh. 8:1-18)
1. Extensive reading & expounding God’s Word (vss. 2-8,18)
 2. Rejoicing with feasting (vss. 10-12)
- F. Prophecy of the ultimate ἐκκλησία (universal/total gathering – πανήγυρις) at the restoration of Jerusalem (Isa. 66:7-24)
1. Isa. 66:10 (LXX) reads: “*Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and all ye that love her hold in her a **general assembly: [πανήγυρις]** rejoice greatly with her, all that now mourn over her:*” (Πανήγυρις as a verbal command πανηγυρίσατε)
 2. Applied to Christians in Heb. 12:18-29! Vss. 22-23 (LGV): “*But you have approached toward Mount Zion, the city of the living God, Jerusalem of heavenly dominion, and tens of thousands of messengers, towards the **universal congregation [πανήγυρις]** and **assembly [ἐκκλησία]** of the first-produced ones having been preregistered in the skies, ...” **Occurs at an appointed FEAST!***
 - a. πανήγυρις also found in Hos. 2:13; Hos. 9:5; Amos 5:21; Ezek. 46:11
 - b. Heb. 12:18-29 contrasts two mountains – Sinai & Zion

1. Sinai – The SON came down on Mt. Sinai with myriads of angels to give the Law (Deut. 33:1-3; Acts 7:30,37-38)
2. Mt. Zion – The Son will come down again and establish His throne in Jerusalem.

IV. The Temple of God (House of God) was the location where God met with His people in ἐκκλησία and promised that His presence would be there when they gathered according to the proscribed appointments.

A. Solomon prayed for God to dwell in the New Temple, but acknowledged that neither it nor the “heaven of heavens” could contain Him.

B. Josephus (1st Cent. Jewish historian) shows the ancient Jewish interpretation by paraphrasing this passage: “*I humbly beseech thee that thou wilt let some portion of thy Spirit come down and inhabit in this temple, that thou mayst appear to be with us upon earth. As to thyself, the entire heavens, and the immensity of the things that are therein, are but a small habitation for thee, much more is this poor temple so; but I entreat thee to keep it as thine own house.” (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Bk. VIII, ch. iv:3)*

V. God abandons His House but preserves a faithful remnant

A. God abhors the Feasts and assemblies due to their hypocrisy (Isaiah 1:1-31)

B. God abandons His Temple, sending Nebuchadnezzar to destroy His house the first time (Ezekiel 8–9; Ezek. 10:4,18,23).

C. God preserves a remnant in ἐκκλησίαι (pl) in Babylon (Jer. 24:1-10) origin of synagogue worship

D. God’s Spirit returns to His House after 70 yrs. (2 Chron. 36:11-23; Zech. 4:1-14)

VI. God abandons His House a second time, but preserves a remnant in ἐκκλησίαι (pl)

A. God abandons His House a second time using the Romans (Isaiah 5:1-30 & Matt. 21:33-46; Isaiah 28:1-19 & 29:1-15; Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-48).

B. The promise of the presence of Jesus in the local assembly: (Matt. 18:15-20)

C. The promise of a new kind of worship: (John 4:20-24)

D. Both the Father and the Son to be present in the ἐκκλησία: (John 13:31-17:26)

1. Criteria: keeping Jesus’ commandments; remaining “in Me” (the body)

E. Pentecost: The initial fulfillment of the promise (Acts 2:1-4)

1. Jesus our **Passover** (1 Cor. 5:7); resurrected on **Firstfruits** (1 Cor. 15:20)

2. **Pentecost** (50th day), anniversary of the ἐκκλησία at Mt. Sinai.

a. The disciples all “like-minded” in perfect unity (vs. 1)

b. Fire divided into miniature pillars of fire (v. 3, cf. Exod. 13:21-22; Exod. 14:19-20; Exod. 33:9-9-11)

c. Apostles were empowered to carry the Gospel to all nations & establish ἐκκλησίαι (v. 4)

VII. The New Testament ἐκκλησία (assemblies):

A. “the assembly of God” is always local

1. Singular: (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 11:22; 1 Tim. 3:2-5)

- 2. Plural: (Rom. 16:16; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4)
- B. "the House of God" (1 Tim. 3:15)
- C. "Body of Christ" (John 2:13-22; Rom. 12:3-5; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:23; Eph. 4:11-16)
- D. "the Temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16-17 (cf. NIV/NKJ); 1 Cor. 6:19-20 (cf. NIV/NKJ) & Lev. 26:11-12); 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; Eph. 2:18-22)
 - 1. "your body" = τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν "the body (sg.) of you (pl.)" adjectival not possessive use of the genitive case: "*the body consisting of you (all)*"
 - 2. the Spirit/Breath IN you could mean either "in you" (if "you" is sg.) or "among you" (if "you" is pl.). Here "you" is plural (See also: Jn. 14:17; 1 Cor. 1:6; Rom. 8:10-11).
 - 3. Each assembly collectively shares in the "Spirit/Breath" in that assembly (Heb. 6:4)

VIII. Divine order in the ἐκκλησίαι (assemblies):

- A. The FEAR of the LORD as foundation @ Mt. Sinai ἐκκλησία (Deut. 4:1-14)
 - 1. Acts 2:41-42,46 perseverance in the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, dining together, & common prayers
 - 2. 1 Cor. 10:1-24 Flee from all forms of idolatry
 - 3. 1 Cor. 6:15-20 Flee sexual immorality ("*glorify God in the body of y'all*")
 - 4. Phil. 1:27 & Eph. 4:1-16 Unity and maturity through sound teaching
 - 5. Heb. 10:19-25
 - a. Boldness to enter the presence of God because Jesus is our High Priest (10:19-21, cf. Heb. 4:14-16)
 - b. Marked by Jesus' blood, and baptized into Him (10:22)
 - c. Holding fast the CONFESSION & HOPE (10:23, cf. Rom. 8:11-25)
 - d. Provoking others to good works by setting examples (10:24)
 - 6. Heb. 13:10-18
 - a. Bear patiently reproach of the religious establishment (13:10-14)
 - b. Sacrifices: "praise," "thanksgiving," & "sharing" (13:15-16)
 - c. Submission to the elders' instruction (13:17)
 - d. Pray (13:18)
- B. Financing the "Temple of God" under the Old Covenant:
 - 1. Num. 18:1-15, 20-31 The 10:1 ratio ("tithe") was based on 11:1 tribe ratio
 - 2. Deut. 26:1-15 Semi-honor system
 - 3. How God views and responds to giving:
 - a. Mal. 1:1-14 inferior quality of Israel's gifts
 - 1. **the Gentiles (v. 11) & Rom. 15:16**
 - b. Mal. 2:1-9 "covenant with Levi" as support for service/teaching
 - c. Mal. 3:6-12 how God responds to faithful giving
- C. Financing the "Temple of God" under the New Covenant:

1. Jesus assumed continuity with OT principles for His followers (Matt. 5:23-24)
 - a. We have an “altar” and “sacrifices” (Heb. 13:10-16)
2. Jesus affirmed “Covenant with Levi” principle for his servants (John 4:34-38)
3. Paul affirmed this principle from the OT & Jesus (1 Cor. 9:1-14)
4. Support for widows and orphans (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; James 1:27)
5. Teaching elders to be given “double honor”(1 Tim. 5:17-18)
 - a. the word translated “honor” means to set a price or value (cf. Matt. 27:6,9; Acts 4:34; Acts 7:16; Acts 19:19)
6. Paul also **ordered** all the assemblies to set aside a special benevolence that coincided with the Feasts of First-fruits & Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:1-8)
 - a. v. 1 Paul ordered “each one” to participate
 - b. v. 2 to be stored up beginning on “mia ton sabbaton” (first day of the Sabbaths), which was First-Fruits, the anniversary of Jesus’ resurrection.
 - c. v. 2 “as he may prosper” taken from Deut. 16:10
 - d. v. 8 collected by Paul after Pentecost (7-weeks {50 days} accumulating)
 - e. 2 Cor. 9:1-15 – on his way to collect this donation:
 1. Psalm 112 taken as a promise for Christians
 - f. Rom. 15:22-29 Paul on his way to Jerusalem to deliver the donation
 - g. Acts 20:16 Paul striving to arrive on **Pentecost** (Acts 21:17-19)
 1. Deut. 16:10 the “freewill” offering was delivered on Pentecost
 2. not given to the priests, but to the elders to distribute

IX. Jesus observes and assesses the ἐκκλησίαι individually: (Heb. 4:12-16; Rev. 2-3)

- A. Ephesus (2:1-7)
- B. Smyrna (2:8-11)
- C. Pergamos (2:12-17)
- D. Thyatira (2:18-29)
- E. Sardis (3:1-6)
- F. Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- G. Laodicea (3:14-22)

X While the presence of God and Christ was intended to dwell in the assembly:

- A. They are also present where two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name (Matt. 18:20)
- B. Or even one (Rev. 3:20)
- C. His presence is promised to those who keep His commandments (John 14:15-8,23).