

# Kingdom Bible Studies



ADULT LEVEL

## LESSON 10

### Church -vs- Ecclesia

#### CONFUSION OF TERMS

Confusion is epidemic within Christendom today. 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 of what it means. Of the few who recognize both terms, most treat them as synonymous. Yet, there is a distinct difference in the meaning of these two words — a critical difference — which is vital if we are to understand Christ's message and kingdom.

This confusion has been caused primarily by mistranslation of Scripture and misuse of the word **church**, coupled with a general ignorance of the meaning and use 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 this difference is understood, the Scriptures will take on their intended meaning.

#### MODERN 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; clergy.

##### 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 used interchangeably and considered by many 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.

## WORD ORIGINS

### CHURCH

Old English CHIRCHE, Germanic KIRCHE, from Greek KURIOKON, or KUROKOS: *of a lord [possessive tense]*; from KURIOS: *lord*.

### ECCLESIA

Greek EKKLESIA: *the called-out (those summoned)*; from EKKALEIN: *to call out, summon*: (EX: *out* + KALEIN: *to call*).

Notice the distinctive differences between the two Greek source words **kuriakos** (a lord's) and **ekklesia** (the called-out). Yet today, the corresponding English words **church** and **ecclesia** are erroneously used as synonyms. As we shall see, Bible translators incorrectly translated the Greek word **ekklesia** into the English word **church**. This mistranslation has caused Christians 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; 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*

The above quote points out some of the difference between the Greek words **kuriakon** (church) and **ekklesia** (ecclesia). A **church** originally referred to a lord's possession (a place of worship), while an **ecclesia** consisted of a designation group of individuals that were called out. Here we have two separate and distinct concepts.

## BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS AND USAGES

As previously noted, the English word "church" comes from the Greek word **kuriakon** and **kuriakos** (#2960 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "belonging to the Lord." The root word **kurios** means "a lord, master; an owner, possessor; a potentate, sovereign" (The Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament). Thus, **kuriakos** indicates something possessed by "a lord."

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. 1 Corinthians 11:20 states, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat \_\_\_\_\_ 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**. In both cases the word "lord's" is translated from this word **kuriakos** (#2962) and indicates possession (something belonging to a lord). It would be logical that the same Greek word would be the basis in referring to a house of worship for a lord (a "lord's" house) — a "church." The English word "church" is an acceptable evolution of the Greek word **kuriakon**. However, by incorrectly applying the word "church" to the Greek word **ekklesia**, the translators have caused people to err.

## ECCLESIA

The English word "ecclesia" is a transliteration of the Greek word **ekklesia** (#1577 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "the called-out." It is derived from the Greek words **ek** (#1537: "out") and **kaleo** (#2564: "to call"). Thus, an **ecclesia** is a group or body of individuals "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 townclerk (recorder: town officer) told the group that the matter should be brought before a "lawful \_\_\_\_\_."

In the above verses, the word "assembly" is translated from the Greek word **ekklesia** (#1577), the same Greek word usually translated "church." 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 potential loss of wealth (Paul's teaching was exposing the false worship of the pagan goddess Diana from which these craftsmen were realizing great profits). Notice also that this informal crowd (mob) was apparently considered "unlawful" since the townclerk told them to take the matter before a "lawful" **ecclesia**. This suggests that **ecclesias** could be formal governmental bodies as well as informal groups — both of which are "called out."

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 every other occurrence of the Greek word **ekklesia**? Obviously, the meaning of "church" would not be appropriate for the context of this passage. Could that also be the case with all the other New Testament occurrences of the Greek word **ekklesia**?

## Greek Ecclesias

A study of Greek culture will reveal that the Greeks referred to governmental assemblies as "ecclesias." Governmental bodies (ecclesias) were used nationally as well as locally. Recall that the dictionary definition of "ecclesia" made reference to a "political assembly of citizens." These ecclesias were composed of Greek free-men who were selected (called out) from the citizenry. Ecclesias consisted of informal and formal bodies of various sizes and were often used for governmental (political) purposes. An ecclesia could be, and has been, described as a "body politic." 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 Scriptures 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 commandments from God at mount Sinai.
2. In the above verse, the word "church" is translated from what Greek word? \_\_\_\_\_

Obviously, Moses was not a member of any "church" organization. Why, then, did the translators use that word? What was Moses a part of? He was part of the nation or family of Israel that God had "called out" from Egyptian bondage to be a free "body politic." 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) Israel out of all the nations 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." This special body politic is what Stephen said Moses was a part of (Acts 7:38). 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.

## 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**.

The above verses make it clear that the **ecclesia** (the called-out ones) is the "**body** of Christ," and that Jesus is the head of that body. "Body" in this context refers to chosen individuals. The implication is that they have been "called out" for some purpose with Jesus Christ as their head. These verses are not referring to a "church" organization of some kind, or a building used for worship.

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

### BODY

The word **body** is translated from the Greek word **soma** (#4983 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "a sound whole." Thayer's Greek Lexicon indicates this word is used of a large or small number of individuals of 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, "For 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.

Notice how the body consists of many brethren who are "members one of another." Notice also that various capabilities are given to these members, examples of which are given in verses 6-8. This same concept is referred to in other passages of Scripture.



## FIND THE ANSWERS

### Read 1 Corinthians, chapter 12

1. In verse 1 Paul is addressing the \_\_\_\_\_ (in Corinth) concerning spiritual gifts.
2. In verse 12 Paul compares Christ to a \_\_\_\_\_ with many \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In verse 13 Paul states that "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 well-being of the body as a "sound whole" (recall Strong's definition of "body" — #4983). The brethren clearly make up the body of Christ (verse 27), and verse 28 indicates that some of those in the **ecclesia** are given particular capabilities and responsibilities (apostles, prophets, teachers, etc.). Take note of how the members of the "body of Christ" are equated to the members of the **ecclesia**.

## FIND THE ANSWERS

### Read Ephesians 5:21-33

6. According to verse 23, \_\_\_\_\_ is the head [prominent; master] 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 was to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the **ecclesia** with the washing of water by the word.
10. Verse 27 indicates the **ecclesia** was to be glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, but it was to be \_\_\_\_\_ and without \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Verse 29 states that the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the **ecclesia**.
12. According to verse 30, "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) by comparing it to a husband-wife relationship. In this comparison we are given some descriptive characteristics of the ecclesia which should help us to identify it.

### 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 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves [the elders], and to all the \_\_\_\_\_, over the which the holy spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the **ecclesia** of God, which He [Jesus] hath \_\_\_\_\_ with His own blood."  
(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 of the world system and regenerated (given new life, i.e. resurrected or reborn) through the promised New Covenant. It is important to note that the word "elders" does not refer to "positions" or "offices" in some "church" organization. It simply refers to older, wiser men who were looked upon as "leaders."

### Ecclesia = Saints

#### **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 unto 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 "sanctified (compare with Ephesians 5:26) and called to be "saints." 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 abundantly clear that ecclesias of saints 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, "Who [Jesus] gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver [select] us from this present evil \_\_\_\_\_ . . ."
3. Verse 6 indicates they had been "**called** into the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ."

Here we see the members of the ecclesia in Galatia being selected from (out of) the Babylonian-style slave system (centralized government) and "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 much of the New Scriptures were letters written to many different ecclesias whose members were addressed as "saints." The word "saints" is translated from the Greek word **hagios** (#40 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "sacred" (holy) or "consecrated." Thayer's Greek Lexicon indicates this word means "set apart for God." Literally, "saints" are "holy ones" or "consecrated ones" — those "set apart" for God's purposes. 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 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. Acts 9:1 indicates 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** at Jerusalem. He also persecuted the **disciples** (followers) of Jesus. This suggests that the followers (disciples) of Jesus were known as the "saints," and they comprised 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 (kingdom) of God under the reign of King Jesus. Because these Christians supported a different government and acknowledged and obeyed a different king, the centralized world system persecuted them (Acts 12:1) — just as it does today. The persecution wasn't over *religion* — it was over *government*.

Notice how Saul went into people's homes to persecute the ecclesia — he didn't go to "church" buildings or organizations. Ecclesias were found in homes (1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Phileman 2), referring to saints who lived there or met there. The ecclesia was not *the place* of meeting, but instead referred to the **people** who met together. Neither was it some structured "organization" in which they had membership. Ecclesias existed from Jerusalem to Rome. In fact, Paul established them during his travels (Acts 16:5). He also revisited many of them and wrote to them. These were not "church organizations" or "church buildings." These were Christian communities united in Christ, not in "organizations" 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 truth 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 (regeneration; quickening) 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.

#### Read 1 Peter 2:1-10

6. Speaking to the scattered "elect" (verses 1-2, chapter 1), Peter tells them in verse 5, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_, a holy \_\_\_\_\_ . . ."
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 **ecclesia** and **church** are not equivalent terms. They are separate and distinct concepts. Using them interchangeably is misleading and wrong. Because of faulty translation, most Christians look to a church — a human-created institution patterned after centralized government — and mistake it for the "body" of Christ. As a result, they have misunderstood the true purpose and essence of Christ's ecclesia — those "called-out" to freedom. Creations of men (churches) have usurped the role of the ecclesias. Thus, the majority of "professing" Christians are being programmed for slavery.

Most Christians mistakenly believe that Christ and His apostles were persecuted because of their "religion," when in fact they were persecuted because of their teachings regarding "government" (ie. The Gospel of The Kingdom). Neither Rome, nor the Jews, would have taken notice of just another religion. But "ecclesias" are not religious institutions: they are bodies of "called-out" Christians living and working together in free communities — the antithesis of central government. When "ecclesia" is understood and recognized, and the term "church" is exposed and discarded, the Scriptures take on new meaning. (More on "ecclesias" in later lessons.)



### LESSON 10

## Church -vs- Ecclesia

### Page 92

1. lord's (supper of a lord)
2. lord's (day of a lord)

### Page 93

1. called
2. assembly
3. assembly

### Page 94

1. church (should be "ecclesia")
2. ekklesia (#1577)
3. wilderness
4. treasure; kingdom; nation
5. chosen; special
6. chosen; peculiar

### Page 95

1. body; ecclesia
2. ecclesia; body
3. head; savior
4. brethren
5. many; body
6. gifts (referring to capabilities)

### Page 96

1. brethren
2. body; members
3. body

### Page 96 cont'd

4. Christ; particular
5. ecclesia (not "church")
6. Christ
7. subject
8. loved; gave
9. sanctify; cleanse
10. holy; blemish
11. nourishes; cherishes
12. members; body
13. ecclesia (His body)

### Page 97

1. elders (meaning "older")
2. flock; purchased
3. flock
4. sanctified; saints
5. saints; Achaia

### Page 98

1. Galatia
2. world (referring to Babylonian system)
3. grace
4. saints; faithful
5. holy; blame
6. Philippi
7. brethren
8. Thessalonians
9. election (indicating a "choice")



### **Page 99**

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

### **Page 100**

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

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**Notes:**