

The Church

What it is and What it Does

“...I will build my church...” Jesus, Matthew 16:18

From the Book of Acts

- Read Acts 1:15, 2:1, and 2:41
 - Who were the 120 referenced in Acts 1:15?
 - Who were “all together in one place,” as Acts 2:1 describes it?
 - In Acts 2:41, what does it mean that 3,000 souls were “added”? Added to what?
- Read Acts 5:11
 - When Luke wrote, “...the whole church,” who was he referring to?
 - Note: This is the first of 17 occurrences of the word “church” in the Book of Acts, more than any other Biblical book except for 1 Corinthians, which also has 17
- Read Acts 9:31, 11:22, and 13:1
 - Why does our author Luke refer to geography when describing these churches? What distinguished them from one another?
 - Can we make similar geographical distinctions today? Why or why not?
- Read Acts 14:21-23 and Titus 1:4-5
 - What did Paul want to leave behind as a result of his missionary work? Why?

Why is it called a “church”?

- Not very helpful: The strange and convoluted origins of the English word
 - Kurikon oikia – a Greek term (not in scripture) meaning “the Lord’s house.”
 - Kurkon – an abbreviated version of the above from the Middle Ages
 - Kirika and Cirice – the West German and Old English of Kurkon
 - Kirkja – The Old Norse version of the above
 - Kirk – From the Scotts (still used today)
 - Chirche – Middle English
- More helpful: The meaning of the Greek word
 - An ekklesia is defined as “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly.” For example, compare:

*"This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.' This is the one who was in the **congregation** (Greek: Ekklesia) in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us." (Acts 7:37-38)*

And in reference to the riot in Ephesus...

*Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the **assembly** (Greek: Ekklesia) was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. (Acts 19:32)*

*But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular **assembly** (Greek: Ekklesia). For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.'" (Acts 19:35-40)*

And Paul and Barnabas at the Jerusalem council...

*"When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the **church** (Greek: Ekklesia) and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. (Acts 15:4)*

- Christians adopted a familiar word, "ekklesia" (thru Jesus' initiation), as a word that came to mean "the assembly of the church", or "those called out from the world into the family of God."
 - Used in a general sense this refers to the universal or invisible church (Eph 5:25). More commonly though, this refers to specific, local congregations, or the visible church (! Cor 16:19)
 - Note that in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Cor 5:12 it is assumed that those people that constitute the local church are easily identifiable. On what basis should we distinguish between insiders and outsiders?

So what is THE church?

- A supernatural enterprise. Read 1 Timothy 3:15
 - In "Life in the Father's House" Wayne Mack writes,
*"The emphasis... falls on the words "of the living God." The church proceeded from God and belongs to God. This Divine originator and owner of the church is God – the only true God. And in contrast to the temples of dead pagan idols, Paul says that this church is **of the living God**. So at all times, he is actively and personally involved in its operations and enterprises."*
 - Read also 2 Corinthians 6:16 and Ephesians 2:19-22.
- A few of the more prominent images found in scripture. What can we learn from each?
 - Christ the Head, the members the body (Read Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23)
 - Christ the Bridegroom, the members the bride (Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:5-9)
 - Christ the Cornerstone, the members the temple (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5)