

# THE CHURCH

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2025

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## Bibliography

I recommend highly the following books as excellent studies of the Church as it is described in the New Testament.

This study is not one in church history or churches defined by the numerous creedal statements, or as experienced in the modern religious world of denominations.

The study is of the church as expressed and discussed in Scripture.

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## Preface

By way of introduction, I am a member of the *Church of Christ* in which I have served as a *missionary, evangelist, pulpit minister, and elder* for over 65 years.

In using *the term church* which I will explain below builds of the Biblical term ἐκκλησία, *ekklesiá*, we learn that *it was a generic term* used in the ancient Greek speaking world, to describe the *gathering of citizens in a local community, or citizens as a body called into a meeting or gathering for a specific purpose.*

In the secular world of the ancient New Testament church, or the first century CE Greek speaking world, ἐκκλησία *ekklesiá*, would refer to *a community of people called to gather for a community or civic purpose, or for a political or business meeting.* It was also used to *call a group of people into a religious meeting.*

Hence, in the sense commonly used today of Christians, it refers to a *congregation of people called together for a specific religious meeting, and purpose.* In the New Testament it most often refers to a *specific group of religious people, as a local congregation, or a church.*

However, this term was also used in the New Testament to describe something larger than a local church, or congregation. It was used by Matthew, **Matt 16:18**, to refer to *a people Jesus was calling, into a new community of believers different from the normal Jewish community of believers which are described in the New Testament as the Synagogue.* Jesus intention was to establish a movement as part of his and God's kingdom mission. This local congregational sense of the term is much greater than that of a *local congregation* which was, however, to be part of *the larger universal kingdom church.* The church that Jesus referred to at **Matt 16:18**, and promised to build, was much larger than a local congregation or local church!

At **Eph 5:25** Paul said *Jesus loved his church having purchased with his own death and blood.* Paul did not have in mind a local congregation/church, but spoke of *the larger community or kingdom church which he was establishing in his ministry.* Obviously this would include local congregations or churches. However, most times the reference is made to church, *ekklesia*, in the New Testament, primarily in the Apostolic epistles, it is referring to the local congregation church, not the universal kingdom church.

To summarize, the *universal kingdom church* Jesus spoke of at Matt 16:18 is made up of *many local congregation churches spread out all over the world.* The local churches form the kingdom church Jesus promised to build, Matt 16:18, and for which he died, Eph 5:25.

So, when I refer to myself as a member of a church I am referring to a local congregation, a local church community which identifies itself as a local church within the larger universal kingdom church of Christ.

However, in my recent retired years I am at the moment *not a member of a local congregational church.* I am a resident in an Assisted Living community, do not have a car, and am not able to attend a regular local church. I “attend” a church service on the internet, but am a proud member of *Jesus' kingdom church.* Furthermore, as a former missionary in Africa preaching the gospel there might not have been a local congregation church present where I was working, for we were on a mission of planting new *local congregation churches* as part of the universal kingdom church.

We might find weakness and failures in a local congregation, or a cohort of local congregations, but there are *no weaknesses and failures in Jesus' kingdom church!* A friend with good intentions of defending the church said that the weakness of the church is that it is made up of people! *True, but not true.* There may be people failures in the local congregation church, but *there are no such failures in the kingdom church,* founded by Jesus and his apostolic disciples. *That is the church we wish to discover in this study!*

I have been a proud member of both churches, local congregations and the universal kingdom church Jesus for over 65 years! I try not to be a weak member of the one, but cherish my membership in the kingdom church which is made up of saved, sanctified, forgiven, and redeemed people!

When addressing the husband-wife relationship at Eph 5 Paul spoke of the kingdom church as follows, “*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*”

In this study we will be examining the meaning of the word *church* as it is used in common conversation and in the New Testament.

We will conclude with some comments on *churches of Christ* throughout the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In our study we will engage in a brief *etymological* and *contextual study* of the term describing churches belonging to Christ, empowered by Christ, and living for Christ throughout the world.

The study will begin with an examination of the *word groups* surrounding the word *church* as it is used in the New Testament.

## Key Greek Words used in this Study

**Kuriakos**, κυριακός, *kuriakos*, *belonging to the lord*. Used twice in the New Testament, Rev 1:10, κυριακῆ ἡμέρα, “*the day of the Lord*,” “*the Lord’s Day*,” 1 Cor 11:20, κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, “*the Lord’s supper*.”

**Ekklesia**, ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, *assembly, gathering, congregation, church*. This word is the word most translated as church in our New Testaments.

**Synagogue**, συναγωγή, *a place of gathering, an assembly, a synagogue*. From Greek words σύν, *sún*, *with, together*, and ἀγῶ, *to go, or to come*.

The English term **church** is found 74 times in the New Testament and not once in the English Old Testament!

The first time we encounter the term church in the New Testament Gospels is **Matt 16:17-19**, “*And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*

In this text the term **church** is used in *conjunction* with, or in the context of **Jesus’ kingdom mission and preaching**.

**The terms kingdom and church are used symbiotically describing Jesus’ ministry, not implying that they are synonymous, but there is a connection between the two terms.** At this point we simply mention that the concepts *church* and *kingdom* are two ways in which *Scripture defines God’s and Jesus’ ministry, their kingdom people, and their ministry*.

As mentioned above, the term **church** is the translation of the Greek term ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*. We will shortly learn that *church* is not the most *felicitous* translation of ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*!

The point I am making here is that we do find the term ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* used in the Old Testament to describe God’s people, and that it is translated as **assembly** or **congregation**.

However, contextually the English word *church* is not found in the Old Testament. Deut 31:30; Judg 20:2; 1 Sam 17:47, *passim*, where it is variously rendered “*all the assembly of Israel*”, or “*the assembly of the people of God*”; “*all this assembly*” RSV. The KJV translates this “*congregation*.”

The difference between the Old Testament and New Testament translations is interesting and one on which we will shortly comment. Suffice it to say at this point that the term ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* used to describe God’s people is not unique to the New Testament.!

As the term ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* is used in the New Testament it refers to the **Messianic community of believers** in Jesus as the Son of God who died and was raised from the dead and who through their faith and obedience were brought into a broad **universal community of believers** and **local congregations** in order to carry out Jesus’ *Messianic commission* which gave to His Apostles and the disciples of all churches.

Hence, we will see the term *church* used for the **universal church** or the *total community of believers* in Jesus which we otherwise call *Christianity*.

The term **church** can also refer to *local congregations* where local Christians *gather, or assemble, worship, and serve* Christ in their *local community*.

Note both the *universal* and *local* uses of the term church in the New Testament.

**First, Matt 16:17-19** which is a reference to the **universal church**; “*And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death*

shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

**Second, Matt 18:17**, which is a reference to the **local congregation**, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the **church**; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

At **Eph 5:21-32**, we have a reference to the **universal church**. This is also supported by the fact that the Epistles to the Ephesians in our New Testament is a circular letter written to several congregations in the Ephesian area. “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as **Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, **as Christ does the church**, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is a profound one, and **I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church**; <sup>33</sup> however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

In the Apostolic first century CE era, **Acts 15:3, 4**, the *church* refers to a **local congregation**, “So, being sent on their way by the **church**, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the **church** and the apostles and the elders”

**Rom 16:1**, likewise, refers to the **local congregation**, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.”

**1 Cor 1:1, 2**, Paul was writing to the **local congregation** in Corinth, “Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> To the church of God which is at Corinth,”

**Rev 2:1**, John writes to seven churches in Asia, naming them. It seems Obvious that this text is in reference to the *local church*, “To the angel of **the church in Ephesus** write.”

### Scriptural Terms Used to Describe God's People

In the New Testament several terms are used to describe God's people. These terms *describe the relationship of God's people with God, Jesus, and one another*. Church is simply one of these descriptive terms, albeit an important one. Notice how these terms are used to describe God's people in different contexts, *kingdom, family, brethren, disciple, body, church*.

The terms each describe a *special relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit*.

#### Kingdom

Kingdom in Scripture primarily describes *God's sovereign rule over all creation*. As it is used in the New Testament it draws heavily on God's relationship with Israel as his called people. God's people are called a kingdom in the sense and to the extent that God reigns in their lives. (Cf the study of kingdom in the Center for Church Resources listings.) The term kingdom is carried forward to describe the restored or fulfilled Messianic kingdom under Jesus Christ which is described in the New Testament. The term kingdom focuses on the kingship or reign of God and Jesus in people's lives.

**1 Sam 8:1-9**, Under Samuel's leadership Israel was well led under God. However, his sons Abijah and Joel, Judges in Beersheba, were not faithful to God. When Samuel got old the elders of Israel asked for a king like their neighbors. Notice God's sad words to Samuel, "*When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.*" <sup>2</sup> *The name of his first-born son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.* <sup>3</sup> *Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.* <sup>4</sup> *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah,* <sup>5</sup> *and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations."* <sup>6</sup> *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us."* *And Samuel prayed to the LORD.* <sup>7</sup> *And the LORD said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; **for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.**"* <sup>8</sup> *According to all the deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.* <sup>9</sup> *Now then, hearken to their voice; only, you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."*

*It is apparent that God saw himself as Abraham's, Moses', Joshua's, and Israel's king.*

**1 Chron 28:5**, "And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of *the kingdom of the LORD* over Israel."

**Dan 11:36-45**, "*And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever;*" <sup>45</sup> *just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter."*

**Dan 7:17,27**, "*These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.*" <sup>18</sup> *But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, for ever and ever.'* *...And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; **their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.**"*

**Mk 1:14, 15**, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.*"

**Matt 12:28**, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then *the kingdom of God has come upon you.*"

**Col 1:13**, “He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and *transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son*,”

### **Family**

Family is a familiar concept which brings out a special relationship between people. It describes the relationship of God and his people in terms commonly understood; God is our Heavenly Father as we are brothers and sisters within His family. The stress in the term is on our *relationship* with God and one another.

**Eph 3:14**, “*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,*”

**Matt 7:11**, “*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*”

**Rom 8:15-17**, “*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*”

**Gal 3:26**, “*But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; <sup>26</sup>for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*”

### **Brethren**

The concept of brethren builds on the idea of *family*. It describes our relationship with one another and how we should treat one another.

**Rom 1:13**, “*I want you to know, **brethren**, that I have often intended to come to you.*”

**1 Cor 1:10, 11**, “*I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. <sup>11</sup>For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, **my brethren.***”

### **Disciple**

The term disciple derives from the Greek μαθητής *mathētēs*; noun from *manthánō*, to learn, to understand, a learner, a pupil<sup>1</sup>. The term is used in the New Testament to refer to those who become followers of Jesus.

**Acts 6:1, 2**, “*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said,...*”

**Acts 9:1**, “*But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,*”

### **Body**

*The Body of Christ*, is a term common in the Apostle Paul’s writings. It is used of Christians, describing them as *one body*, or members of *the one body of Christ*. It is also used in analogy to the human body which is comprised of many different members with different function, but all are *one body*. Individual members are different having different giftedness and service, but the members all serve one another. The term body not only describes *function*, but stresses also the *unity* of the body of believers in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, μαθητής, *mathētēs*.

**1 Cor 12:12-27**, “For just as **the body is one and has many members**, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> **For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.** <sup>14</sup> For the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup> But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup> If all were a single organ, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. <sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. <sup>27</sup> **Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.**”

### **Church**

*Church* is possibly the most common word describing the people of God in the New Testament. It is to this word that we give some attention in this study.

We will ask “*What is the church?*”

*Who makes up the church?*

*How does one become a member of the church?*

*What does the church do?*

What is the Church of Christ?”

As we have already observed, the word church is referred to 74 times in the New Testament. The word churches, plural, appears 35 times in the New Testament.

The expression *churches of Christ* appears twice (2 times) in the New Testament.

***The remainder of this study is devoted to examining the word church and its implications for Christian life.***

### The Etymology of the *English* word *Church*

I have included the following discussion out of an interest in following the numerous renderings of *church* in our modern English Bibles.

To those of us who have been taught that the word ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, means *church* this can be a little confusing, but is nevertheless reasonable!

How did we arrive at the word *church* for the Greek *ekklesia*?

*A long enigmatic but interesting journey!*

Because it has become customary to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* of our Greek New Testament as *church* in English we *assume* that *ekklesia* actually means *church*.

*This is somewhat misleading.*

Ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, *actually refers to an assembly, a congregation, or a gathered group of people!*

Thus the **English** word *church*, which is widely used in the New Testament, *has an interesting history.*

The **Middle English** word *church* in our New Testament *originally derived from the Greek word κυριακός*, not ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia!*

Κυριακός means "of the Lord," "belonging to the Lord." cf. 1 Cor 11:20, "When you meet together, it is **not the Lord's supper** that you eat." <sup>20</sup> "Συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν." The *Lord's supper*, κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, means, *the supper belonging to the Lord!*

The modern English word *church* is related to **German/Middle English** translation of the Greek word κυριακός, from *kurios*,<sup>2</sup> which means *belonging to the Lord*.

The Germanic word for *church* is *cirice*. This in context means the church is something "*belonging to the lord.*"

So the original Greek word κυριακός, **Germanic and Middle English cirice**, refers to a people *belonging to the Lord, hence, the church is a people, an assembly, belonging to the Lord!*

The *Greek* in our New Testaments, ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, which our English translations have rendered as *church*, is a little confusing since *church* is not a good translation of *ekklesia*, but a *transliteration* from the Greek and Germanic κυριακός!

As mentioned above, the English word *church* descended from the ancient Germanic word, *cirice*. This Germanic word *cirice* was taken up into the Old English as *cirice*, which *sounds like church*. Eventually, in the Middle English dialect, this became *chereche*. *This is similar to Afrikaans/Dutch word kerke! Which also sounds like church!*

Finally, we arrive in the process, to the use and development of the Germanic Old English word *chereche* through the Middle English to the Modern English word *church*.

However, the meaning of words is not normally determined *phonetically*, how it *sounds!* Meaning is determined *etymologically contextually*, or by *common usage!*

The result of this interesting discussion is that in our modern English Bibles we translate ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* as *church* rather than *assembly*, or *congregation*, or *people belonging to the Lord*.

The English word *church* is *transliterated* from the Germanic word *cirice*, and not a precise translation of the Greek ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia!*

The ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, *church*, then, should be read and understood as *assembly* or *congregation* of *people belonging to the Lord!*

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, κυριακός *kuriakós* ... from *kúrios* ... *lord, master, belonging to a lord or ruler*. Only in 1 Cor. 11:20; Rev. 1:10 as *belonging to Christ, to the Lord, having special reference to Him*. Hence, *Kuriaké*, which came to mean *Kuriaké Hēmera*, the "Day of the Lord," what we call Sunday. It was the day kept in commemoration of Christ's resurrection (John 20:19–23; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2 [see Rev. 1:10]).

The English translation of ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* as church is *reasonable*, and *good*, as long as we understand that ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* means *an assembly, a congregation of people who belong to the Lord!*  
***We need to remember that our English, Spanish, German, etc., words always carry withing themselves deeper meanings than appear on the surface!***

### Usage of the English word *church*

The word ***church*** can be used in English in several contexts to mean a *building* in which Christians *assemble*, the *assembly* itself, a *congregation* of Christians meeting together, a *group* of Christians in an *organization* around a specific doctrinal, geographic area, or specific ethnic group, a religious *denomination*.

Several language groups have assumed similar terms derived from the ancient Germanic *cirice* to describe the above English usage, German – *Kirche*, Dutch/Afrikaans – *kerk*, “Scottish” – *kirk*, Italian – *chiesa*.

Interestingly, rather than following the Germanic *cirice*, other language groups have followed the Greek/Latin tradition surrounding the word ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* which is often translated in English Bibles as *church*! In Latin, ***church*** is *ecclesia*, in French, *eglise*, in Spanish, *iglesia*, in Afrikaans and Flemish, however church is ***gemeente, a gathering***.

It is interesting to note that English translations, from the earliest Wycliffe and Tyndale translations through the King James Version to modern English translations, have mostly chosen, to translate the Greek ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia* as ***church*** rather than *assembly, community, or congregation*.

## The Word *Church* in our English Translations

The English word **church** appears 74 times in the New Testament in 73 verses (RSV), 79 times in 77 verses (NIV), and 80 times in 79 verses (KJV).

The Greek word ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* in its various forms appears some 114 times in the New Testament. The most common translation of ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* in the New Testament is **church**. It is also translated on a few occasions as **assembly**, likewise, it can on occasion be translated as **congregation**, the word **congregation** is found 150 times in the *Septuagint* (Greek translation of the Old Testament, ca 230 BCE, sometimes identified simply as LXX).

In some instances the translation *congregation* derives from, ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, on others it is from συναγωγή which means as *a place of assembly* or *a gathering place*. Συναγωγή is often translated as *Synagogue* which literally means *a place of assembly*.

In the New Testament συναγωγή appears 49 times, most often simply as the Jewish Synagogue. On rare occasions συναγωγή is used of the church as an *assembly*, possibly only 3 times.

What is revealing and fascinating in this study of the English word *church* (which derives originally from the Greek κυριακός which means *belonging to the lord*), is that κυριακός is never translated as *church* in the English New Testament. In fact κυριακός is found only twice in the New Testament, in **1 Cor 11:20** where it is translated “the *Lord’s* supper”, and in **Rev 1:10** it is translated “the *Lord’s* Day”.

Thus, primarily, the English word *church* is a translation of the Greek ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* which means *an assembly, community, or congregation*.

### ***The following texts are Scriptures we will later refer to in this study.***

Matt 16:18 – “*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death* (ᾅδης, *hádēs*<sup>3</sup>) *shall not prevail against it.*”

Acts 15:3, 4 – “*So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren.* <sup>4</sup> *When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders*”

Acts 15:22 – “*Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.*”

Eph 1:22 – “*and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,* <sup>23</sup> *which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.*”

Eph 5:21 – “*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*”

Eph 5:32 – “*This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*”

Rom 16:1 – “*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.*”

Rom 16:3-5 – “*Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,* <sup>4</sup> *who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks;* <sup>5</sup> *greet also the church in their house.*”

Rom 16:16 – “*All the churches of Christ greet you.*”

Rom 16:23 – “*Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church,*”

1 Cor 1:2 – “*To the church of God which is at Corinth.*”

1 Cor 4:17 – “*as I teach them everywhere in every church.*”

1 Thess 1:1 – “*To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

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<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, “ᾅδης *hádēs*, in Homer and Hesiod the word is spelled *Haidēs* meaning obscure, dark, invisible. Hades, the region of departed spirits of the lost (Luke 16:23). In all the NT passages except Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15, Hades is associated with death. It expresses the general concept of the invisible world or abode into which the spirits of men are ushered immediately after death.”

Rev 1:11 - “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven **churches**, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

### ***Summary of the discussion thus far on church***

Above, we noticed the following interesting thoughts from the above brief study of the English word *church* and the Greek word ἐκκλησία:

Our **English** word **church** is not derived from the Greek ἐκκλησία which means *an assembly, gathering, community, or congregation*, but the word *church* is a “transliteration” of the Greek word κυριακός, German *Kirche*, Afrikaans, *kerk*, which actually means *belonging to the Lord*.

***The English word church in our New Testaments refers to a group, an assembly, a congregation of people who have responded to the call of Jesus in the Gospel, who belong to the Lord and and who function as a special people of Christ.***

*Church* as it is used in the New Testament can refer to the **universal church** or **universal congregation**, or *community* of God’s people in Christ (Matt 16:18, and most of the occasions the word *church* is found in Ephesians such as Eph 1;22).

Or, *church* can be used of **a local congregation**, or *community* of God’s people **meeting in a specific location** such as Antioch, Jerusalem, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Revelation.

We might summarize our study this far be defining the **church** in the New Testament as an **assembled community**, of God’s people in Christ, **universal or local**, who have *responded to the call of Christ*, and who **belong to the Lord**.

The **universal and local communities** of God’s people *belong to the Lord, assemble in local community groups or congregations* in different geographical locations such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philadelphia, Laodicea, *etc.*, to **assemble with the purpose of worshipping and serving the Lord**.

## So, what is the *Church*?

What propels the concept of church to *the forefront of our theological thinking* is the fact that **Jesus himself** had focussed attention on the concept of church *by promising to build His Church* based on the confession of Peter that he, *Jesus, was the Christ*. **Matt 16:13-18**, “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” <sup>14</sup> And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.**”

The *church* that Jesus promised to build would be a *community of disciples* who would *believe* in him through the preaching of the Apostles, who would believe in his divine mission and purpose, and who would surrender their lives to him in an obedient faith.

### *The Universal Church*

As noted above, the word *church* was used first by Jesus before the term became a “home” symbol of the first century CE Apostolic church. Jesus had spoken of building his church on the foundation of Peter’s *confession that “Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God.”* Jesus spoke of establishing a *community, a congregation, an ἐκκλησία, ekklēsia* which would facilitate his kingdom mission. He had in mind more than a few local congregations! His church would be universal and global. Matt 16:18 “*I will build my church.*” In the Ephesian Epistle it appears that Paul speaks not of one single congregation but of *the church universal*.

At Eph 1:22, Paul spoke of the church as a universal body of people, a church for over which Jesus would be the head. “*And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,* <sup>23</sup> *which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.*”

Eph 3:20, continues Paul’s reference to a universal church, “*to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.*”

Eph 5:21-32, Paul pleaded for the Christians to husbands and wives to love one another and be subject to one another *out of reverence for Christ who had loved his church, giving his own body to sanctify the church.* “<sup>22</sup> *Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.* <sup>23</sup> *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* <sup>24</sup> *As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.* <sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* <sup>26</sup> *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* <sup>27</sup> *that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* <sup>28</sup> *Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* <sup>29</sup> *For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church,* <sup>30</sup> *because we are members of his body.* <sup>31</sup> “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*” <sup>32</sup> *This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;* <sup>33</sup> *however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*”

### *The Local Congregational Church*

In the New Testament most of the *congregations of believers* in Jesus met in homes, that is, *they were house churches*. There are few references of church houses or buildings in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE era.

**Colossae.** *The Church in Colossae seemed to be situated in the home of Philemon,*

“<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:”

**Rome,** Rom 16:3-16. “*Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,* <sup>4</sup> *who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks;* <sup>5</sup> *greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ.* <sup>6</sup> *Greet Mary, who has worked hard among you.* <sup>7</sup> *Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.* <sup>8</sup> *Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.* <sup>9</sup> *Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.* <sup>10</sup> *Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.* <sup>11</sup> *Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.* <sup>12</sup> *Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.* <sup>13</sup> *Greet Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also his mother and mine.* <sup>14</sup> *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren who are with them.* <sup>15</sup> *Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.* <sup>16</sup> *Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”*

It seems most likely that most of the congregations in Rome were house churches. These churches were members of the universal community of God’s people, in Christ, who met in local house churches.

**Corinth,** 1 Cor 1:2, “*the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:*” There is no record of a single congregation church meeting house in Corinth. Most scholars suggest that the church in Corinth met in a house or some houses

**Ephesus,** Acts 19:9, “but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily *in the hall of Tyrannus.*” It is likely that in some church or congregation in Ephesus met in homes or schools or other public buildings.

### ***Who Were the Members of these Local Congregations and House Churches mentioned in the New Testament?***

Acts 1:1-11 speaks of the Apostles gathering in Jerusalem in some form of meeting, possibly the earliest Christian gathering in Jerusalem, the first meeting of the Apostles, who were those who believed the gospel message about Jesus, that he was the Christ. We have no mention of any conversion process at this point. As time went by, others who believed were added to the number of original disciples in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:1-42 traces the beginning of communities of believers in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. We can trace the beginning and early growth of the gatherings of believers in Jerusalem and beyond in the book of Acts 2:37-47, “*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”* <sup>38</sup> *And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* <sup>39</sup> *For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.”* <sup>40</sup> *And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”* <sup>41</sup> *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* <sup>42</sup> *And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching*

*and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* <sup>43</sup> *And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.* <sup>44</sup> *And all who believed were together and had all things in common;* <sup>45</sup> *and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.* <sup>46</sup> *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,* <sup>47</sup> *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

Although this text does not speak of the word *church*, it speaks of *those who believed in Jesus Christ, who repented, who were baptized for the forgiveness of sins, who gathered together, worshipped together, and who had fellowship together, and of others who being saved were added daily to them, presumably the earliest reference to gatherings or congregations of believers in Christ.*

Acts 2:42-47. We do get an idea of some gatherings in this paragraph, *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* <sup>43</sup> *And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.* <sup>44</sup> ***And all who believed were together and had all things in common;*** <sup>45</sup> *and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.* <sup>46</sup> *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,* <sup>47</sup> *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

Acts 4:3, we read that *a great many who heard the word and believed, the number of the believers in Jerusalem now numbering above 5,000.* *“But many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*

Acts 5:11, is the first mention of *the word church in Acts is found in 5:11* when Ananias and Sapphira sold land under a lie and were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit. *“Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.* <sup>11</sup> ***And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.”***

Acts 8:1 records Saul’s persecution of the church in Jerusalem, *“And Saul was consenting to his death. And on that day a great persecution arose against **the church in Jerusalem;** and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.* <sup>2</sup> *Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him.* <sup>3</sup> ***But Saul was ravaging the church,***”

Very early the gospel message and the church *spread rapidly into Samaria, and the ends of the earth,* Acts 1:8, reaching even into Rome. In his Roman Epistle Paul addressed the Jews who did not believe in Jesus, encouraging them to accept the Gentiles and the Gentiles to believe in Jesus. *Both Jews and Gentiles would be saved in exactly the same manner, by the same gospel which taught a salvation by God’s grace through an obedient faith in Jesus as the savior and Christ.*

Rom 10:12, 13, *“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him.* <sup>13</sup> *For, “**everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.**”*

In the New Testament the members of the *churches or congregations* were described as those who *heard the calling of God through Jesus, who believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, who repented of their sins, and who were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.* They were then added to the number of the original disciples and *found in congregations, churches,* scattered throughout the ancient world.

## What Did the Early Churches Call Themselves?

It is interesting to follow the growth of Christianity and the church in the *Book of Acts* which reflects *the earliest churches established in the New Testament*.

### **Brethren**

Acts 1:15, 16. In the earliest days after the resurrection of Jesus Luke describes the followers of Jesus simply as *brethren*, Acts 1:15, 16, “*In those days Peter stood up among the **brethren** (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said,* <sup>16</sup> “**Brethren**, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus.”

### **Disciples**

Acts 6:1-7. In a short time in Jerusalem the *brethren* were designated simply as *disciples*, “*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.* <sup>2</sup> *And the twelve summoned the body of **the disciples** and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.* <sup>3</sup> *Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty.* <sup>4</sup> *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* <sup>5</sup> *And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.* <sup>6</sup> *These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them.* <sup>7</sup> *And the word of God increased; and **the number of the disciples** multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”*

The *disciples* “movement,” or *nascent church* became progressively identified by different terms. No one name seems to have been universally adopted or required.

### **The Way**

Acts 9:1,2, “*But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest* <sup>2</sup> *and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way**, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”*

### **Brethren identified as Disciples**

Acts 6:1-7, “*Now in these days when the **disciples** were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.* <sup>2</sup> *And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.* <sup>3</sup> *Therefore, **brethren**, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty.* <sup>4</sup> *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* <sup>5</sup> *And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.* <sup>6</sup> *These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them.* <sup>7</sup> *And the word of God increased; and the number of the **disciples** multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”*

### **Disciples known as Christians**

Acts 11:26, “*So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul;* <sup>26</sup> *and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people; and **in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians.**”*

### **Christians gathered in Churches or congregations**

Acts 5:11, The first time the word church is mentioned in Acts (in Jerusalem), “And great fear came upon ***the whole church***, and upon all who heard of these things.”

Acts 8:1, “And on that day a great persecution arose against ***the church*** in Jerusalem”

Acts 9:1, “So ***the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria*** had peace and was built up;”

Churches in villages and cities throughout the Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all over the world joined in a “fellowship” of believers and congregations or churches. These local churches, congregations, were variously identified, named, or denominated – the linguistic definition of denomination means *named* or *designated*, not a religious denomination, but as churches named after Christ and their geographic location as the Church of God in Corinth, 1 Cor 1:2, “*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus,*”

Rom 16:16, *churches belonging to Christ* universally identified, denominated themselves, as *belonging to Christ*, “***All the churches of Christ*** greet you.”

Gal 1:22 – churches of Christ in a geographic area, “And I was still not known by sight to ***the churches of Christ in Judea***”

1 Thess 1:1 – the church which belongs to God and Jesus, “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To ***the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ***.”

## Is the Church of Christ a Denomination?

*The debate over this question ranges over two approaches, cultural-linguistic and theological discussions.*

### The English Lexical/Dictionary of the Word Denomination

Before we get involved in a debate over an issue we need to determine what the issue is, In our case here it is the dictionary, English, meaning of the word *denomination*.

The **Oxford English Dictionary** describes the word *denomination* as follows:

“The word “*denominate*” originates from the Latin “*denominatus*,” which means “to name” “to designate.” It is derived from the prefix “*de*” meaning “completely” and the verb “*nominare*,” which means “to name” or “to designate”. The term has been used since the 1550s and is related to the concept of *naming or calling something by a name other than its proper one.*”

The **Merriam-Webster English Dictionary** reads, “to give a name: to designate. “

### Summary of lexical definitions of the word denominate, or denomination.

To *denominate* is to give something a distinctive name that would clarify its identity.

In other words, when you give something a distinctive name to differential it from other concepts, you have just *denominated* it.

When you describe something as a *photo* you have just *denominated* it as distinct from other forms of *pictures*!

When you describe an object as a *man* you have just *denominated* the object by giving it name that distinguishes him from other objects, like *dog*.

When you designate an organization as a *church* you have given it a name that distinguishes it from other organizations like a *supermarket*.,

When you give a church a name, like the *Baptist Church*, or *Church of Christ*, you have just designated it, *denominated* it, as a *church different from others*.

### Linguistically and Culturally the Church of Christ is a Denomination

Speaking *sociologically* or *culturally*, and in correct linguistic terms, **The Church of Christ** is a *denomination* in that as a congregations of people they **have chosen to denominate, describe themselves, name themselves differently** from others by giving themselves a different name form others!

They are **The Church of Christ**, not **The Church of England** or **The Lutheran Church**. They have chosen to *designate, denominate* themselves, **describe themselves**, by a name after Christ, not England, nor Martin Luther.

*Churches of Christ* are not members of a religious denomination in the sense of a group of churches bound together with a headquarters and head of the church, or bound together under a synod or controlling body. Churches of Christ hold to no written creed other than the Bible, have no earthly head, and no earthly headquarters.

*Biblically* and *theologically* all *Churches of Christ* are independent local congregations who worship and serve only under *Christ and Scripture*, and in the diverse local congregations under Elders (Bishops and Pastors) and evangelists or ministers.

Churches of Christ as local congregations are bound simply by a shared fellowship in Christ. They cooperate with one another but only by mutual choice and fellowship.

Although the *terminology Church of Christ, or church of Christ*, is widely, and globally used by this fellowship of believers, *there is always present a diversity of opinion in matters not relating to salvation and ones relationship with Christ and God that distinguishes them from others.*

Some congregations denominate themselves, name themselves differently, *church of Christ, Church of Christ*, or as we noted in Paul's address to churches in Thessalonica and Corinth. Some prefer not to engage in congregational church buildings, located Bible Classes, while others study the Bible in church building classes on a regular schedule. Some prefer a shared *one cup* in communion others use small individual glasses, some are *acappella singing as in the chapel*, or *without a musical instrument* in regard to *singing in worship*, *others use the instrument to accompany singing in worship*. Such differences are matters of congregational Biblical study, choice, opinion, or preference.

## **Biblically and Theologically, the Church of Christ is a denomination!**

The Church of Christ, of which I am a member, *thinks differently, it does not think like the Ethiopic Church of Ixopo*, it *names itself differently to distinguish it from others*. According to the English language, which you and I speak, and in which you are reading, ***it is a denomination.***

***We adopt a name, possibly a different name, to define ourselves.***

The ***one body, one church*** in the New Testament, *universal or local*, demonstrates ***a theological unity.***

Theologically, this church is *one church*, it is not defined differently by ***theological differences!***

Paul argued in **Eph 4:1-16** that *there is only one church*, the church which Jesus established and for which he died and *into which you were baptized* with the one baptism in Christ for the remission of sins!

**Eph 4:1-7**, “*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,* <sup>2</sup> *with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love,* <sup>3</sup>***eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*** <sup>4</sup>***There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call,*** <sup>5</sup>***one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*** <sup>6</sup>***one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.***”

Paul's Ephesian mission was apparently being challenged by one or more quasi Christian/religious groups, a Jewish-legal oriented group, a Gnostic flavored movement, and other religious movements surrounding the Temple of Artemis. Paul's argument in **Eph 5:25f** was that Jesus had died to save one body of people built on faith in God the Father and Jesus, not Gnostic or other philosophic movement.

At **1 Cor 12:12-31** Paul declared that *there is only one body* with many members with various gifts, but *only one body, the universal church*. “<sup>12</sup>***For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*** <sup>13</sup>*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

<sup>14</sup>*For the body does not consist of one member but of many.* <sup>15</sup>*If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.* <sup>16</sup>*And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.* <sup>17</sup>*If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?* <sup>18</sup>*But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose.* <sup>19</sup>*If all were a single organ, where would the body be?* <sup>20</sup>*As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.* <sup>21</sup>*The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”* <sup>22</sup>*On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable,* <sup>23</sup>*and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,* <sup>24</sup>*which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part,* <sup>25</sup>*that there may be no*

*discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*

*<sup>27</sup> Now **you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.** <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the higher gifts.”*

At **Eph 1:22** Paul indicates that *there is only **one body, the church***, over which Jesus is the head, “and he has put all things under his feet and has **made him the head over all things for the church**, <sup>23</sup> **which is his body**, the fulness of him who fills all in all.”

**Col 1:18.** “He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent.”

### ***There is one head over the one body, the one church!***

*Most bodies have only one head! One head implies one body! Biblically and theologically there is only one body, one church, the church that Jesus established over which he is the head! But within that one kingdom universal church there are several church bodies each with different needs and characteristics. They are each designated, named differently, denominated by theological need and cultural and linguistic contexts.*

When Paul described a church as *the church at Colossae*, or *at Corinth*, or *at Thessalonica*, he had just given them *a unique name* that described them. They had different problems and issues which are indicated by their inclusion in the canon as one church but with different characteristics.

**Paul had just designated, denominated them.**

Each of these churches had unique issues that differentiated them both culturally and religiously. *However, theologically they were all one united kingdom church under God the Father and Jesus the Saviour!*

Determining whether a church falls under the headship of Christ is determined by their individual religious or theological characteristics, not by *their name which denominates them!*