



<p>EKKLESIA</p>  <p>Church</p>	<p>Transliteration:</p> <p><i>Ekklēsia</i></p> <p>(conversion from Greek to English)</p>	
	<p>Pronunciation:</p> <p><i>ek-klay-see'-ah</i></p>	
	<p>Strong's: 1577</p>	
<p>Definition: noun</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assembly 2. Local bodies of Believers 3. Universal body of all believers 		

Ekklēsia is comprised from *ek* (1537), a primary preposition denoting origin such as the point a motion or action proceeds, of place, time, or cause and *kaleo* (2564), to call, host, name, invite, know as, or summon. *Ekklēsia* is found in Classical Greek from the 5th century BC onward and was used for the assembling of citizens of the city for legislation and other public business.

Ekklēsia occurs about 100 times in the Septuagint for the gathering of Israel. The usual word is *synagogue* (4864), which is used to translate various Hebrew words 225 times. When it is used, it refers to the meeting place of the local Jewish community or assembly. The followers of Jesus didn't use *synagogue* to refer to their meetings they used *Ekklēsia* which is translated "church" everywhere in the NT except (Acts 7:38, Hebrews 2:12) where it is translated congregation and (Acts 19:32, 39, 41, Hebrews 12:23) where it is translated assembly.

What is the Church? A study of the Church in the New Testament reveals it's not a new Judaism, not the kingdom of heaven, not a denomination, and not an earthly organization or building. *Ekklēsia* is a unique word used a few times for the meeting together of believers but most often to describe the believers who constitute a local church or all believers, past, present, and future who constitute the universal church which is the complete body of Christ.

Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, speaks the first occurrence of *Ekklēsia* in the NT. "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). He promises "For where two or three are gathered in my name there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). Jesus speaks of personally building this new community on

the confession of His Lordship. At Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39), Peter tied the events there to the promises of a Davidic Messiah (2Sam. 7; Pss. 16:10).

The uniqueness of the *Ekklēsia* is described in various ways. God "obtained (the church) with the blood of His own Son" (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit dwells in the church, which is God's temple (1Cor, 3:16). The Spirit works powerfully within the Church, bestowing special gifts on its members for the building up of the church (1Cor. 12-14).

After the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, the early church met in homes, devoting themselves to the apostle's teachings, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42-47). They sang hymns, recited Scripture, and praised the Lord (Colossians 3:16-17).

Several local churches are mentioned in the NT: Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), Antioch (13:1), Ephesus (20:17), Galatia (1:2), and Judea (1Thess. 2:14). According to Scripture, the local church is for God's people to gather for worship, exercise their gifts and equip them for service.

The church is identified as the body of Christ (1Cor. 12; Col 1:24; Eph. 1:22-23), the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 3:16-17; 2Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-21), the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33), and the people of God (1Pet. 2:9-10).

The body of Christ refers to the universal church and local congregations. Paul repeatedly calls the church "the body of Christ". In 1Cor. 12:13 Paul writes, "we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" and (1Cor. 12:27) "Now you are the body of Christ."

The description of the church as the body of Christ designates Jesus' rule over the community. He exercises sovereignty by His Spirit and His Word. Through His resurrection He is named "Head" of the church. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent (Col. 1:15-18).

Believers are united to Christ in His death and resurrection. The body metaphor shows the unity of believers in Christ. The remarkable sense of unity of all Christians, in spite of the geographical distance and the fact that the early church already included people of various backgrounds, is expressed not only in the use of *Ekklēsia* both for Christians as a whole, but especially in the image of the church as the body of Christ.

What a miracle the church is. It is the living entity that God is using to bring about His purposes on earth. And, what a blessing it is to know each of us is an integral part of it.