

Introduction:

"Church" used in many forms today. The word to many implies religion; a building with a steeple, clergy, pews, songbooks, Bibles, etc. Catholicism sets the standard, an institution with official decrees, performs weddings, baptisms, annulments, funerals, absolves sins, ordains clergy, gives the last rites. Many see the church as some kind of institution such as IBM or Walmart.

I) Defining "Ekklesia"

A) To call out, to separate (Not necessarily religious in usage)

1. Ball teams are composed of players called out or separated from the population to play ball.
2. Cattle were branded to separate them from other cattle.

B) When used religiously we refer to people called out of the world into Christ

1. Out of world into the Kingdom of Christ,

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

2. Jesus makes the point His disciples were not of the world.

John 15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

II) Usage in the Old Testament

A) Used 40 to 50 times

1. The assembly of Jews in the wilderness,

Acts 7:38 *"This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,*

Deuteronomy 9:10 *"Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.*

Deuteronomy 18:16 *"according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'*

2. **Hebrews 2.12** uses the word assembly for ekklesia

Hebrews 2:12 saying: *"I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."*

3. Israel was a separated group of people for a specific purpose, to be different, Holy, special.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

B) New Testament used 115 times

Acts 19:32 *Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.*

1. **Acts 19.32** the assembly was basically a mob of people; **v. 39** the lawful assembly; **v. 41** the mob or assembly
2. Sometimes ekklesia used to refer to something more than just an ordinary group of people

C) A collective noun -- a thing that is composed of a plurality of elements

1. A team, a jury, school, flock, committee, etc.

2. Just as there is distinction between a chain and one link there is a distinction between one person and a group of people. A juror is not the jury, a link is not the chain.

III) **Jesus Promised To Build His Ekklesia, *Matthew 16.18***

Matthew 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

A) Not a building or an institution but a collection of people

1. When you think of "church" you should think of people.
2. A herd of cattle is not an institution nor an organization.
3. In this case the "church" had not been established but the disciples understood He is speaking of His disciples.

B) Some things to know from *Matthew 16.18*

1. This was to be different from the Jewish nation
2. It would belong to Christ; He would call them out,

John 10:1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. **2** "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

John 10:7 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep...**9** "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

C) The church is a bunch of people who have been called out by Christ and they follow Him,

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

1. The seven churches of Asia does not refer to 7 church buildings but 7 groups of people in 7 areas that had been separated by Christ.
2. **Acts 20:28** "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Church is a collection of people. What group of people?*

IV) Church Is A Non-Descriptive Noun

A) A collection of people who are not described by the term itself.

1. As said before it was used to refer to the Jewish nation, a mob at Ephesus, and Christians at Corinth.
2. A team? What team, what sport, what city, etc.
3. Other terms used to refer to those called out -- the house of God (**1 Timothy 3.15**), the body of Christ (**Ephesians 1.21-22**), the temple in the Lord (**Ephesians 2.21**), the kingdom of The Son (**Colossians 1.13**)

B) The body needs identification

1. The body of Christ, Churches of Christ (**Romans 16.16**), household of God (**Ephesians 2.19**)
2. Those who following Christ, keeping His commands, baptized into Him, are the sanctified, the redeemed.

V) Usage

A) The whole body of Christians scattered throughout the whole world,

Hebrews 12:23 *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

- B) The assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting,

1 Corinthians 14:28 *But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.*

- C) Those who are following Christ and live in one area
- D) Those people who have obeyed the voice of the Lord, been saved from their sins (**Mark 16.16**); have been added to His body (**Acts 2.47**); and are living faithfully to His word (**Revelation 2.10**). They composed the "church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Are you a member of that church?