

# The Problem With “Church”



I've been going to church just about my whole life. You could say that I was born into it. But here's a question for you right off the bat: What did you understand “church” to mean when I wrote it?

I bet the majority of people who read this, picture some kind of building that has pews, and maybe stained-glass windows and incense... It might immediately give you a gut reaction of fond memories of music or singing or ... it might bring back memories of profound boredom and your mother whacking you quickly on the head because you were making too much noise.

Now I am *not* going to talk about “denominations.” Those are different branches of the Christian faith that usually share almost the same Bible but often have different rules, different words and terms, and even different types of people in charge. I *am not* going to get into that because (this might surprise you) this is often where things begin to drift.

You see, there is another understanding of “church” that a lot of people don't know about. It's a tragedy because it is the kind of “church” that Jesus actually started and wanted to continue.

The reason why this understanding of “church” gets missed is because, well, Jesus didn't use the word we translate as “church” in the way we commonly use it. To get nerdy for a minute, the word “church” actually originates from a Greek term *kuriakon* or *kuriake* which means “of the Lord” or “belonging to the Lord's.” It only appears in the Christian Scriptures twice: [I Corinthians 11:20](#) and [Revelation 1:10](#) ... and (get ready) *neither* instance references a building! In *both* Scripture instances it means simply, “the Lord's.” (Check it out: [I Cor. 11:20](#) and [Rev. 1:10](#))

And yet, we *know* Jesus got into the whole getting together to learn and spend time together, right? What word *did* Jesus use? Jesus used the Greek word *ekklesia* when he spoke of his assembly or gathering. And *yes*, if you look at *ekklesia* in any version of your Bible, it will be translated (you guessed it): “[church](#).”

Welcome to the difficult world of translating from one language to another (ancient *or* current). Add in our own person experiences and understandings and well, it can get really messy.

Here is what Jesus' “church” was to look like:

1. It was a community, *not a building*, that went beyond geography, cultures, races, and even time. ([Matthew 16:18](#))
2. It was a community that was specifically committed to *all* of Jesus Christ's Mission and Message which focused on *just two* commandments. ([Mark 12:28-34](#))
3. It was a community that recognized Jesus Christ as its head or ruling authority. ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#))
4. It was a community that believed that Jesus Christ was *Immanuel*, which means “God with us.” ([Matthew 1:23](#), [Isaiah 7:14](#))

5. In this community, there would be *no distinction* between individuals for *any reason*. ([Galatians 3:28](#))
6. It was a community in which love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control were obvious. ([Gal. 5:22-23](#))
7. It is a community that teaches Jesus Christ’s Mission and Message with truth and love. ([2 Timothy 4:2](#), [John 13:34-35](#))

[This was Jesus’ “church.”](#) *Nowhere does Jesus describe a building with a big tower and a bell on top and a leader that wears fancy robes, etc. as his “church.” NO WHERE* in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) does Jesus describe a building. Buildings and structures aren’t wrong – they just aren’t the essence.

I’m guessing, if you’ve read this far you are shaking your head because you know that there is *no “church” on the planet* that consistently meets all of Jesus’ desired elements. That’s because all “churches” are human-made/run and none of us humans are perfect. But some are better than others. Think about having a place that regularly offers these wonderful things to all who enter their doors. Wouldn’t it be worth some time and effort to find such a place?

### **Scripture to maybe check out:**

- I gave you a bunch in this post. I hope you check some of them out!

**P.S.** I used the New Revised Standard Updated Version of the Bible in these Scripture links, published by the National Council of Churches of Christ published in 2021. Feel free to check these passages out in whatever Bible version you prefer—almost all of them are available on Bible Gateway!

What are your thoughts about this post? Email me and let me know!

[honesttheology@gmail.com](mailto:honesttheology@gmail.com)

*This post begins a series I’m going to go further with entitled “What Jesus Meant By...”  
I would love to hear your questions and suggestions for future topics.*