

What Does Church Really Mean

Understanding the Difference between "Church" vs. "Assembly" [Congregation, Gatherings] & Why This Matters

Proper Meaning of Ekklesia [Church] vs. Episunagógé [Assembly]

The proper meaning of ekklḗsia ("church") has been unfortunately intermixed with the word for "assembly", "congregation", in the online concordances and dictionaries. This can be confusing. However, we can be the ekklḗsia individually or gathered, because even when we are alone, we are not alone, but spiritually connected in Christ as His body, regardless of how, when, or where He assembles us. The true meaning of the word ekklḗsia is simply one who is called out. This is any one of us, individually physically, while spiritually connected in Christ Jesus. Those who are called out from the world of darkness to the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus, who has been made the Head of the church [ekklḗsia], which is HIS BODY, THE FULLNESS THAT FILLS ALL IN ALL. [Ephesians 1:22-23]

That doesn't mean we don't assemble and gather with one another, as this is what we are instructed to do. "Let us not forsake the assembling [episynagōgēn] of ourselves together, as the manner of some, but exhort one another, and do much more as you see the Day drawing near. [Hebrews 10:25]

When we are called out, we are never alone. We abide in Christ and are filled with the Spirit of God, with access to God the Father. In other words, though we are absent in the body, we are always present in the spirit through Jesus Christ as head, and His Spirit in us. We are assembled in Christ Jesus in a beautiful orchestration only God can do. This is why some, even if in prison or alone in a hospital, are interconnected as an ekklḗsia [called out one] in episynagōgēn [gathered assembly] in Christ and God, even if no other physical person is present. Sometimes you don't realize how much you need God until you are utterly alone in the body [physically]. This is also why Paul could say, "For though I am absent in the flesh [physically], yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your orderly array and steadfastness of your faith in Christ." [Colossians 2:5]

For this reason, I went on a deep dive into how we have come to define ekklḗsia [called out one] as a church assembled in or place to gather. When I see the words either "church" or "assembly," I go back to the original Greek to see which term is really being used, even though they seem to be defined these days interchangeably, even in Bible Hub, which I use the most.

1577. ekklésia

Incorrectly defined as an assembly, a (religious) congregation

Original Word: ἐκκλησία, ας, ἡ;

translated in Hebrew it is knesia

(כנסיה)

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: ekklésia

Phonetic Spelling: (ek-klay-see'-ah)

Usage: an assembly, congregation, church; the Church, the whole body of Christian believers.

Properly defined: **1577** *ekklēsia* (from **1537** /*ek*, "out from and to" and **2564** /*kalēō*, "to call") – properly, people *called out from* the world and

to God, the *outcome* being the *Church* (the mystical *body of Christ*) – i.e. the universal (total) body of believers whom God calls *out* from the world and *into* His eternal kingdom.

[The *English* word "*church*" comes actually from the Greek word *kyriakos*, "belonging to the Lord" (*kyrios*).

1577 /*ekklēsia* ("church") is the root of the terms' "ecclesiology" and "ecclesiastical."]

1997. episunagógé

episunagógé: a gathering together, an assembly

Original Word: ἐπισυναγωγή, ἡς, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: episunagógé

Phonetic Spelling: (ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay')

Definition: a gathering together, an assembly

Usage: a gathering (collecting) together, assembling.

Cognate: **1997** *episynagōgḗ* – a *specific* (apt) "grouping together" that fulfills (builds *on*) the specific *purpose* of the gathering

together (note the *epi*, "on"). **See** **1996** *episunagó: to gather together*.

Original Word: ἐπισυνάγω / **Part of Speech:** Verb

Transliteration: episunagó / **Phonetic Spelling:** (ep-ee-soon-ag'-o) /

Definition: to gather together / **Usage:** I collect, gather together, assemble. / **996** *episynagō* (from **1909** /*epí*, "on, fitting" and **4863** /*synágō*, "gather together") – properly, bring together (gather), i.e. group together (collect), especially to accomplish the intended *purpose* of the gathering. (Note the force of the prefix, **1909** /*epí*.)

So, even when we are not assembled, we do not cease being the "called out ones".

In the beginning of the church, those who were "called out" would assemble in homes, in buildings, but we have created a different type of "churchianity" based on traditions of man rather than the true meaning and intent of the "called out ones". We seem to have missed the direct "mission" or "commission" of it as well. In my research, I found the following articles that I have read and feel confident in this commentary regarding the original meaning and intent of *ekklēsia* [*ecclesia*] and *episunagóge*.

[The Correct Meaning of "Church" and "Ecclesia"](#) [Aggressive Christianity]: Excerpt - "Ecclesia" is an entirely different word with an entirely different meaning than "kuriakos." In fact, the Greek word "kuriakos" appears in the New Testament only twice. It is found once in I Corinthians 11:20, where it refers to "the Lord's supper," and once again in Revelation 1:10, where it refers to "the Lord's Day." In both of those cases, it is translated "the Lord's..." - not "church." This word does not appear again in the New Testament. Nonetheless, this is the unlikely and strange history of the word "church" as it came to the English language. Eventually, through the manipulation of organized religion, "church" came to replace "ecclesia" by popular acceptance. Again, we must emphasize the importance of knowing word meanings to know the intent of those who wrote the Scriptures.

[Ekklesia: The Called-Out Ones](#) [RC Sproul]: Excerpt - In a sense, this is a microcosmic look at what Jesus does for the whole kingdom of God—He calls those whom He wants. The Greek word that is translated as "church" in the Bible is *ekklesia*. This word is made up of a prefix and a root. The prefix is *ek* or *ex*, which means "out of" or "from." The root word is a form of the verb *kaleo*, which means "to call." Thus, *ekklesia* means "those who are the called-out ones." Simply put, the invisible church, the true church, is composed of those who are called by God not only outwardly but inwardly by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus calls someone to discipleship, He is calling that person to Himself, to belong to Him, to follow Him, and to learn from Him and of Him.

[What is the Meaning of Ekklesia \(church\)?](#) [Christian Courier]: Excerpt – Most concede that the original etymology is "called out," but it is contended that, with the passing of time, the root meaning faded away and gave place simply to "assembly, gathering, congregation."