

Chapter 3



What is Church?

What is church? It's a complex subject to discuss because there are so many opinions about the "Church." There are also many definitions for the word "Church."

In this chapter, we have information that may be new to you that we would like to share regarding that word.

Think for a moment about the word "church." What picture comes to your mind? I venture to

say that something similar to this picture comes to mind for most people.



The picture that comes to my mind when I think of the word "church" is the place where my mom and dad first met Jesus in 1954. I was privileged to return to that church as their pastor in 1972.

This was my first congregation as a young pastor. I have fond memories of church.

Some of the information I am sharing today may be new to you and may sound controversial. But I'm going to ask you to please listen to my heart. Don't misunderstand what I am saying from my heart. I have great love for the people of God's Church and don't want it to be misunderstood. I am not church-bashing. I do have some things to say about church that may be hard to hear and hard to listen to. But actually, I love the people of the congregations of God, the churches of God. My sincere motivation is not to harm but instead to help. So, please keep that in mind as we move forward today and talk about "church."

First, I'd like to look at a basic definition of the word "church." To do that, we're going to look at Webster's Dictionary. Webster's Dictionary is held as the classic dictionary for the English language. When we look up the word "church" in the Websters Dictionary, we find these definitions:

The first definition of "church" is a building for public and predominantly Christian worship. According to Webster's definition, "church" means "building." I know that many pastors will say, and I've said too, as people are



leaving the service something like, "Now remember as you go out into the world, this building is not the church, you are the church, so go be the church in the community." In reality, that's not an accurate statement. Because the word "church" itself does mean a building, it refers specifically to a building in our English language.

Secondly, it refers to the clergy or officialdom of a religious body. The word “church” can mean the persons that are ordained for the ministry of the gospel. That is to say that the clergy serves the church. The word “Church” is often capitalized to refer to a body, or an organi-



zation of religious believers, such as the whole body of Christians gathered together from all the ages. In this case, “Church” would be capitalized and used to refer to the invisible Church or the

Catholic Church. It also refers to a denomination such as the Presbyterian Church.



I grew up in a church called the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, UB for short. The word



“Church” is used as a name or label in this case. It could refer to the Baptist, the Presbyterian denomination, the Methodist, or many other denominational names. In these cases, “Church” refers to a group or denomination of people. It’s also used to refer to a public worship service. For example, “He goes to “church” every

Sunday.” Or you may have heard someone say, “Wow, wasn't the worship team great at “church” this morning?” Or, “What did you think of the pastor’s sermon at “church” this morning?” Those statements refer to the worship service that people attend. Sometimes, people ask, “Where do you go to ‘church’?” They are talking about where you attend a worship service.

Hopefully, the definitions I have given here will help define and give various examples of the definition and common usage of the word “church.”

To summarize our definitions of the word “Church”: It's a building. It refers to the clergy, the organization, a denomination, a public divine worship service, or a clerical profession. That's the Webster's textbook definition of Church. That's not my opinion; those are not my words. If you don't like that definition, blame Webster and the other dictionaries that agree with him. Most of the other dictionaries will say the same thing. To fully understand what the word church means, we need to do a little historical study of that word.

When You Look Up The Word “Church”?



According To Webster's Dictionary

1. A Building
2. The Clergy
3. The Organization
4. A Denomination
5. A Public Divine Worship Service
6. A Clerical Profession

How did we get that word into our English language? The study of the history of the development of terms is called etymology. We will look at the history of the word “Church.” and its etymology. Where did it come

from? How did we get it in our English language?

The word Church comes from the old English word “Kirche.” And that word is related to older Dutch and German words. The Dutch are Kerk, and the German word is “Kirche.” Those are the origins as far back as the English, Dutch and German language is concerned. But, the Dutch and the German

Etymology of: “Church”



It comes from Old English *cirice* related to Dutch *kerk* & German *kirche*

Which came from a Greek word: “*kyriakon*”

“*kyriakon*” – means “of the Lord” or “the Lord's”

It is used twice in N.T.:

I Cor 11:20 – “the Lord's supper”

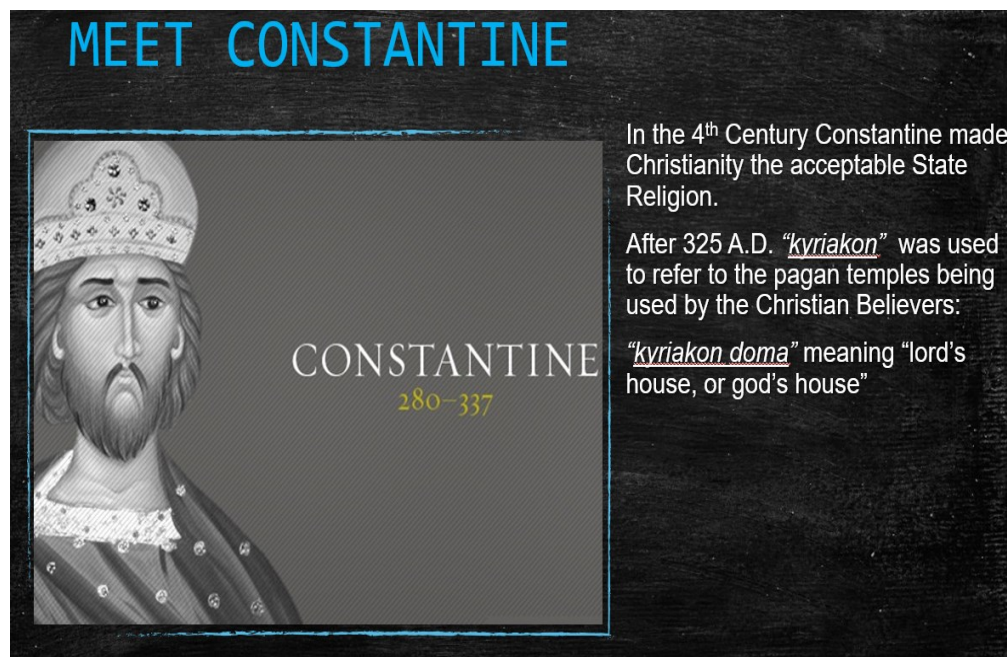
Rev 1:10 – “the Lord's Day”

word came from the Greek word “kyriakon.” You can look at the word “kerk” and “Kirche” and see that they would come from the first part of kuriakon.

“Kyriakon” is a word in our Bible. It means “of the Lord” or “the Lord’s.” It is used twice in the New Testament. Once in 1 Corinthians 11:20 where it refers to the Lord’s Supper. It is also used in Revelation 1:10, which says, “ I John was in the spirit on the Lord's day.” And in both of those instances, kyriakon is translated as “Lord’s Supper” and “Lord's Day.” But what you need to understand is that Jesus never spoke that word. Jesus never said the word “kyriakon,” and Jesus never said “church.” He never spoke that word in reference in any way. It is used twice in the New Testament, once by Paul and once by the Apostle John. It was not used to refer to a building, a worship service, a denomination, a structure, or anything like that. It was never used to refer

to a building in the New Testament.

To understand how the words ‘church’ and “kyriakon” became associated with the building Christians meet in, we need to understand what Constan-



tine did. Constantine was the emperor or King of the Roman Empire from 280 to 337 A.D. Before his rule and reign, Christians were severely persecuted. All through the New Testament and until about 325 AD., Christians were persecuted; they were beheaded, impaled on stakes, dipped in oil, and used as candles to light parties. They were burned at the stake. Christians were brutalized and persecuted.

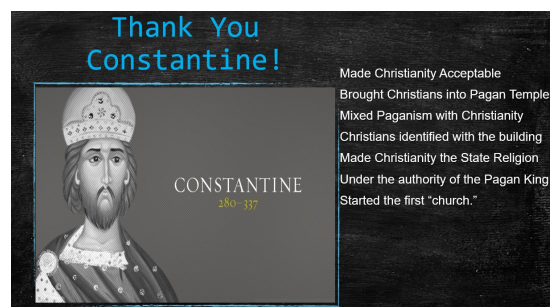
It wasn't until the 4th century that Christianity began to become accepted by the world. At that time, Constantine was going to go into a battle. He looked up at the Sky and saw a cloud formation in the form of a cross. He thought he heard the words, "in this sign, Conquer." Constantine had the sign of the cross painted in red on all his soldiers' helmets, their breastplates, and the front of their shields. They went into that battle, and they were victorious. As a result of this occurrence, Constantine began to favor Christians and Christianity. He made Christianity the state religion.

After 325, the word "kyriakon" began to refer to a place Christians would meet—a building. Up until 325, Christians met in homes or outside under the trees. The new policies of Constantine changed this.

The word "kyriakon" had been used in the Roman Empire to refer to the buildings where pagans met for their worship services. After 325, Constantine allowed Christians to meet in those pagan buildings. At that point, the word "kyriakon" began to refer to the building where Christians met. It was associated with another term, "doma," which means "house." So, its usage was "kyriakon doma," meaning "lord's house" or "god's house." This did not necessarily represent the God of heaven, as in "God's House."

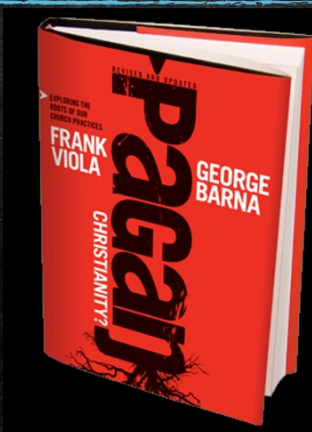
It was a place where a god was worshiped. Many pagan deities were worshipped in these buildings. Constantine allowed Christians to begin using the buildings. So, the word "kyriakon" was first associated with where Christians met sometime around 325 A.D.

We can thank Constantine for the mess we're in today. It was Constantine who made Christianity acceptable to the world. He brought Christians into Pagan temples. Before Constantine, Christians met daily throughout the week, wherever and whenever. But Constantine renamed the calendar days. He named Sunday after the god that he had been worshipping, the sun god. He required Christians to begin meeting on Sunday. This also happened in 325 AD.



If you want to read more about this, there's a book called *Pagan Christianity* by George Barna. You can order the book online. This book reveals the origins of most things we do in Christian churches today. The source of many of the practices and traditions of the Christian church is rooted in the pagan religion.

Supplemental Reading



Pagan Christianity
Frank Viola & George Barna
Almost everything we do in church today can trace its roots and origins to pagan religion.

Constantine mixed Paganism with Christianity. He allowed Christians to begin being identified with the building where Christians met, the *kyriakon doma*, the

Lord's House. People would say, "Where are the Christians this week?" "They are at the *Kyriakos doma*, the Lord's house corner." Maybe you've heard the expression, "The Lord's House."

As a child, I was rambunctious. I would run through the Church building. The pastor would grab me by the scruff of the neck or by my arm and say, "Russell, stop running! This is God's house! Don't run in God's house!" That was drilled into my mind at a very young age.

Constantine made Christianity the state religion acceptable to everyone and placed it under the authority of a pagan king. He made himself the leader of that combination of Christianity and paganism. Constantine started the first church.

What I am sharing here may be shocking, but as I said, Jesus never said the word “church.” Jesus never started a church. None of the disciples in the New Testament ever started a church. It is true to say that Constantine was the very first church planter because he started the first church in 325 A.D. Everyone in the Ekklesia should research this for themselves and search this matter out.

We have dealt with the basic definition of the word “church.” We've studied the word's etymology and how it came into English. Now we need to take it another step.

How did the word church get into the English language Bible? We will talk about King James and King Henry VIII to reveal this.

Henry VIII was the Catholic king of England. He wanted to divorce his wife. The Pope would not grant a divorce. Henry decided to leave the Catholic church and cre-

ate the Church of England and all of Great Britain. He then declared himself the head of the Church of England. Buildings and Cathedrals that once belonged to the Roman Catholic Church became the property of The Church of England. Henry became the owner and the executor of all the churches in Great Britain.

King Henry's action enacted something called the Divine Right of Kings. In effect, all the churches in Great Britain were made accountable to the king, and the king was accountable to God. Everything was just about the same except that he was appointing himself as a new pope over the Church of England and all the churches of Great Britain. The structure was essentially the same.



Following the death of King Henry VIII, His son Edward ascended the throne

MEET KING Edward VI



- Officially began Protestantism
 - Ended:
 - Clerical Celibacy
 - Catholic Latin Mass
 - Began:
 - English language Service
 - Enacted:
 - Devise for the Succession (to keep England Protestant)

at the age of 9. He was the first English monarch to be raised as a non-Catholic. Edward took great interest in matters of religion. Under him, Protestantism officially began as he officially renounced some Catholic doctrines and ceremonies such as clerical celibacy and the Cath-

olic Mass. Under Edward, compulsory services in the English language were imposed. Edward and his council also enacted the “Devise of the Succession” in an attempt to keep England from returning to Catholicism.

Edward was found to be terminally ill and he named his cousin Lady Jane Grey, to succeed him. This excluded his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth. Following Edward’s death, his decision to name Lady Jane as heir was disputed. Jane was deposed by his half-sister Mary nine days after she had become queen. Mary was a Catholic, and she reversed Edward's Protestant reforms during her reign. When Edwards’s other half-sister Elizabeth took the throne, she restored Edward’s Protestant Reforms. This took place in 1559

The Bible was already translated into English when King James became king after Elizabeth. James was the son of Elizabeth’s sister Mary who had reigned before Elizabeth. Many people think that King James brought us the English translation of the Bible. This is not true. His Grandfather, Henry VIII, had commissioned the first English Bible.

By that time, two Bibles had been translated into English. The bishop’s Bible and the very monumental work by William Tyndale called Tyndale’s Translation.

When Tyndale translated the word “Ekklesia” into English, he used the word “congregation.” This was an accurate translation.

KING JAMES I



King James was King of Scotland & England from 1567 to 1625.

In 1611 King James directed the KJV Translators to intentionally mis-translate "ekklesia" as CHURCH

Appointed 47 Anglican Bishops

Gave Instructions to Mis-Translate Bible

3. "The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, as the word *church*, not to be translated *congregation*."

Inserted the word "Church" 115 times for the word "Ekklesia" which was previously translated "Congregation"

King James didn't like Tyndale's translation of the word "Ekklesia" into the word "Congregation" because there were congregations that were called separatists. They were meeting outside of the church system during that period. They were called separatists or non-conformists. William Tyndale was one of them. For his act of translating the Bible into English, William Tyndale was burned at the stake and martyred.

King James wanted to place the word "church" in the Bible. He wanted to add credibility to his church system. He thought this would add Biblical foundation and credibility to the church system and keep him in power as the head of the church. James was King of Scotland and England from 1567 to 1625. His translation of the scriptures, called The King James Version, was completed in 1611. He had directed the men that he commissioned to translate the Bible, a group of 47 translators, to intentionally mistranslate the word "Ekklesia" to the word "church" in the King James Version of the Bible.

We owe a big thank you to King James. He appointed these 47 Anglican bishops to translate the Bible again into English. They used William Tyndale's translation as a basis. Every once in a while, he instructed them to mistranslate various words, including replacing the meaning of the Greek word "Ekklesia" with the English Word "Church."

If you wonder why what you read about in the Bible and what you see in the church today are hard to reconcile, it is because the word “Ekklesia” means “congregation,” “assembly,” or, to put it simply, “the people.” The term “church”

means “the building” and all the system that goes with it.

After what has been revealed here regarding church and Ekklesia, let me pose the question, Is “church” and “Ekklesia” the same thing? In the previous chapter, we talked about “Ekklesia,” and in this chapter, we talked about “church.” Once again, Webster’s definition is a building, the clergy, a denomination, an institution, a public

Is “Church” & “Ekklesia” The Same?

Church

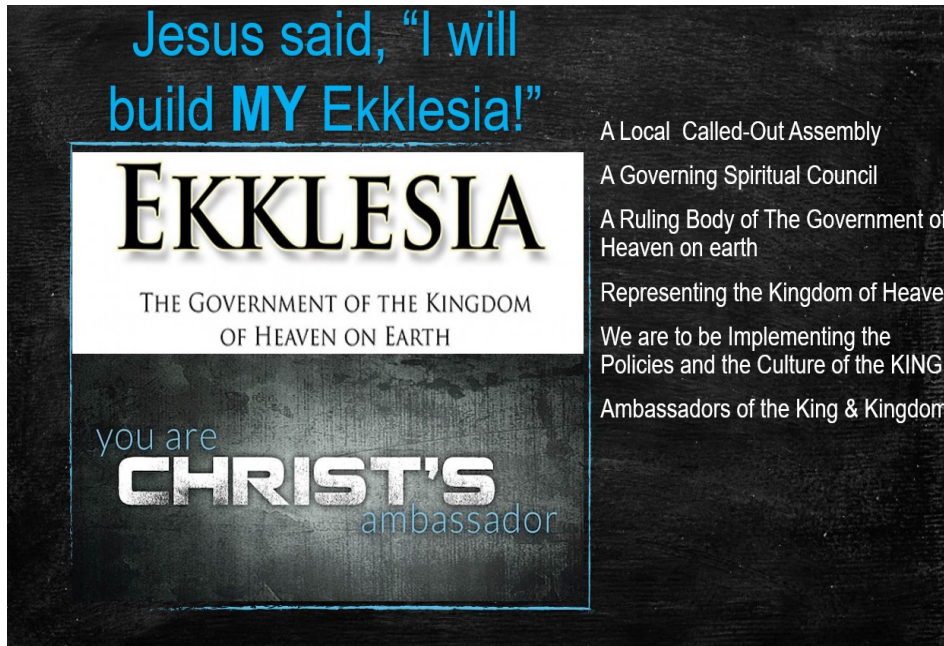
- A Building
- The Clergy
- A Denomination
- An Institution
- A Public Worship Service
- A Clerical Profession

Ekklesia

- A Called Out Assembly
- Governmental Assembly
- Ruling Council
- Kingdom of Heaven on Earth
- Representatives of The King
- Ambassadors of Heaven

worship service, or a clerical profession. This is how “church” is understood in our culture today.

But what about “Ekklesia”? What did it mean? This is a review of the previous chapter, What is Ekklesia? We saw that it's a called-out assembly. It's an assembly of people. It's a congregation of people called out by the King himself. It's a governmental assembly—a ruling council of the assembly of heaven on earth. Ekklesia is to function in a governmental way in a city, a region, or a state. Ekklesia is to serve as a ruling council of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. They are representing the King of heaven, not the King of England. Not any other state, not the King of any other empire, only one King. Representatives of that King, his name is Jesus. It is serving in their communities as ambassadors of heaven. Establishing the Kingdom of heaven on earth everywhere they would gather. This is an embassy of the Kingdom of heaven on earth.



So, when Jesus said I will build “My” Ekklesia in Matthew 16:18, when he spoke those words, he wasn't talking about building a building. He didn't say go into all the world and build structures. Yet that's what we've done. He didn't say that. He said Go. That we are to Go, as

representatives of heaven: a called-out assembly, a governing spiritual council, the ruling body of the government of heaven on earth. Representing that Kingdom and implementing the culture, the lifestyle of the King everywhere we are. Listening to the King, getting directives from headquarters our headquarters. It s not a church denomination building. Our headquarters is not a state organization; it is not the state. Our headquarters is in heaven. That's where we're to get our directives from the King himself and implement them as his ambassadors here on earth, bringing the Kingdom of heaven to earth. That's why he called us. We are Christ ambassadors of the Kingdom of heaven.

Now we come to the application and activation for you to do some homework. We'll ask you to get two or three of your neighbors, friends, or relatives and do a little survey. Ask them what do you think of the word church. When you think of the word church, what comes into your mind? Ask the question we started with today. What picture comes to mind when you think of the word church? Just ask them if you need to tell them that you're doing some research for this online study course and that this is your homework assignment this week. Maybe have them over for a barbecue while you're sitting around talking or going to a restaurant. While you're sitting talking, say, " Hey, I've been taking this online study course, and part of my homework assignment is to ask people, when you think of the word church, what comes to your mind?