

What Is the Church?

The Greek word *ekklesia*, most often translated by the English word “church,” appears in the New Testament 114 times. Printed below are the verses in which this word occurs (the translation used is the New International Version) .You are invited to ponder what the New Testament has to say about “church.”

Take some time to read thoughtfully and carefully these verses. You may want to notice which books of the New Testament use the word most often, whether the singular or plural is dominant, or whether *ekklesia* is used most often in a local, regional or worldwide context. In some instances, you may want to read the larger context of a verse in your own Bible. In any case, you will want to ask yourself what these and any other observations you may make mean. What does the New Testament mean by “church”?

Matt. 16:18- And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matt. 18:17- If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Acts 5:11 - Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Acts 7:38 - He was in the congregation [*ekklesia*] in the desert, with our fathers and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai; and he received living words to pass on us.

Acts 8:1- On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

Acts 8:3- But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Acts 9:31 - Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

Acts 11:22- News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

Acts 11:26 - So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

Acts 12:1- It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

Acts 12:5- So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Acts 13:1- In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

Acts 14:23 - Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:27- On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Acts 15:3, 4- The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Acts 15:22- Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 15:41- He [Paul] went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 16:5- So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Acts 18:22- When he [Paul] landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

Acts 19:32- The assembly (*ekklesia*) was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another.

Acts 19:39- If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly (*ekklesia*).

Acts 19:41- After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly (*ekklesia*).

Acts 20:17- From Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28- Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Rom. 16:1- I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

Rom. 16:4, 5- Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets in their house.

Rom. 16:16- Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

Rom. 16:23- Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

I Cor. 1:2- To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ-their Lord and ours.

I Cor. 4:17- He (Timothy) will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

I Cor. 6:4- Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

I Cor. 7:17- Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

I Cor. 10:32- Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.

I Cor. 11:16- If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice - nor do the churches of God.

I Cor. 11:18- In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a Church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.

I Cor. 11:22- Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

I Cor. 12:28- And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

I Cor. 14:4, 5- He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

I Cor. 14:12- Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

I Cor. 14:19- But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

I Cor. 14:23- So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

I Cor. 14:28- If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

I Cor. 14:33, 34, 35- As in all the congregations (*ekklesia*) of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

I Cor. 15: 9- For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

I Cor. 16:1- Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.

I Cor. 16:19- The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

II Cor. 1:1- Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia.

II Cor. 8:1- And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

II Cor. 8:18-19- And we are sending along with him [Titus] the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help.

II Cor. 8:23, 24- As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore, show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

II Cor. 11:8- I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.

II Cor. 11:28- Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

II Cor. 12:13- How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Gal. 1:2- To the churches in Galatia.

Gal. 1:13- For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

Gal. 1:22- I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Eph. 1:22- And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him [Christ] to be head over everything for the church.

Eph. 3:10- His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

Eph. 3:21- To him [God] be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Eph. 5:23, 24, 25, 27- For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to the husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Eph. 5:29- After all, no one has ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.

Eph. 5:32- This is a profound mystery- but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Phil. 3:6- As for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Phil. 4:15- Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.

Col. 1:18- And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Col. 1:24- Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Col. 4:15, 16- Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

I Thess. 1:1- Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Thess. 2:14- For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews.

II Thess. 1:1- Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II Thess. 1:4- Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

I Tim. 3:5- If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

I Tim. 3:15- If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

I Tim. 5:16- If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

Philemon 2- To Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home.

Heb. 2:12- He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation [*ekklesia*] I will sing your praises."

Heb. 12:23- [You have come] to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

James 5:14- Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

III John 6- They have told the church about your love.

III John 9, 10- I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first will have nothing to do with us...Not satisfied with that he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

Rev. 1:4- John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia.

Rev. 1:11- "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches."

Rev. 1: 20- "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14- "To the angel of the church in Ephesus...Smyrna...Pergamum...Thyatira...Sardis...Philadelphia...Laodicea write."

Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22- “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Rev. 2:23- “Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”

Rev. 22:16- “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”