

# What is Church

Today's Conversation:

What is Church?

Church:

1. a building for public Christian worship. 2. a religious service in such a building. 3. (sometimes cap.) a. the world body of Christian believers; Christendom. b. any major division of his body; a Christian denomination. 4. The Lord's house.

–Webster's Dictionary

In our English Bible the Greek word, "ekklesia" is translated in most places "church." The word "ekklesia" is found in one hundred and fifteen places in the New Testament. It is translated in English one hundred and thirteen times "church" and the remaining times it is translated "assembly." In classical Greek the word "ekklesia" meant "an assembly of citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly."

The word as used in the New Testament is taken from the root of this word, which simply means to "call out." In New Testament times the word was exclusively used to represent a group of people assembled together for a particular cause or purpose. It was never used exclusively to refer to a religious meeting or

In the time of the New Testament religious fellowships were not called "ekklesia," but "thiasos" or "synagogue".

Ekklesia, derived via ek-kaleo, which was used for the summons to the army to assemble, from kaleo, to call. From the 5th century B.C.E. onward. The usage of antiquity was the popular assembly of the competent full citizens of the polis, city. It reached its greatest importance in the 5th cent, and met at regular intervals (in Athens about 30--40 times a year, elsewhere less frequently) and also in cases of urgency as an extra-ordinary ekklesia.

Its sphere of competence included decisions on suggested changes in the law (which could only be effected by the council of the 400), on appointments to official positions and -- at least in its heyday -- on every important question of internal and external policy (contracts, treaties, war and peace, finance). The ekklesia opened with prayers and sacrifices to the gods of the city.

The Roman rulers--the Caesar's, had local "ekklesia" in which they promoted their own deity (imperial worship) and erected temples to themselves.

So, what does this mean?

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of death will not overcome it.