

Principles on the Local Church: Etymology of Biblical Terms; All Believers are Saints: Set Apart for Special Service; the Local Assembly: Heb 10:24

Principles on the Local Church:

- 1) The Greek word that is translated “church” is **ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia***, which is an Attic Greek word for “assembly.” Its original use referred to the town meetings in Athens where citizens would gather to conduct civic business.
- 2) In the Old Testament, two different words are used to denote gatherings of the Israelites: □ ***edah* [עֵדָה]** meaning “congregation” and ***qahal* [קָהָל]**, “assembly.” In the Septuagint, *sunagōgē* is the usual translation of *edah* while *qahal* is commonly rendered *ekklēsia*. *Sunagōgē* was more commonly used by the Jews in our Lord’s time, and probably influenced the first believers in adopting *ekklēsia* for Christian use.¹
- 3) The etymology of the word “church” is helpful to note before we continue:

Church, from Greek *kuriakē* [κυριακή] plus *dōma* [δῶμα, house], the Lord’s house. From *kuriakos* [κυριακός], belonging to the Lord.²

The Church (*ekklēsia*). The English word “church” with its cognate form, “kirk,” is derived from the Greek word *kuriakon*, signifying “the Lord’s” or “belonging to the Lord.” The New Testament equivalent *ekklēsia* was originally employed by the Greeks to denote an assembly or congregation of free citizens summoned or “called out” by a herald in connection with public affairs.³

- 4) Scholars working on the King James Version translated *ekklēsia* with the English word “church” rather than “assembly.” This was not a bad choice when the origin of the word “church” is considered.
- 5) There are two technical uses for *ekklēsia* in the New Testament: (1) the universal church made up of all believers throughout the Church Age: the “called out,” the “elect,” or the “body of Christ,” and (2) the local church body that “assembles” in the same geographic location, such as a house or other facility.

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 542.

² *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*, 2d ed., s.v.: “church”; Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford University Press, 1968), 1013.

³ Merrill C. Tinney (gen. ed.), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 1:845.

- 6) The human author of Hebrews chooses the word **ἅγιον, *hagion***, to describe the holy place in the Tabernacle. The word is the adjectival form of the verb of **ἁγιάζω, *hagiazō***: to sanctify. This word means “to be set apart for special service.”
- 7) Paul refers to those who make up a local body of believers as the “Church of the living God.” However, the building in which they meet is also implied in the sense that it has been set apart for special service: the worship of God through inculcation of His Word.
- 8) The body of believers that assembles in a local church includes members of the universal church. Every person in this local church is commanded to assemble themselves together:

Hebrews 10:24 - Let us consider [present active subjunctive of **κατανοέω, *katanoeō***] how to encourage one another from the source of virtue love and from the source of divine good production.

v. 25 - Stop forsaking [present active participle of **ἐγκαταλείπω, *enkataleipō***] the assembling of ourselves together [**ἐπισυναγωγή, *episunagōgē***], as is the habit of certain ones, but encourage each other [present active participle of **παρακαλέω, *parakaleō***], and all the more [**καὶ τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον, *kai tosooutōi mallon***: Classical Greek phrase for extreme emphasis] as you see the day [**ἡμέρα, *hēmera***: the Rapture or physical death] approaching.

- 9) The classroom for Christianity is the local church. Believers in a geographic area are mandated to assemble for Bible study under the ministry of a pastor-teacher.
- 10) Believers are to consider how they might encourage each other. The word “consider” is present active subjunctive of **κατανοέω, *katanoeō***. This subjunctive mood is a hortatory imperative.
- 11) A hortatory subjunctive is commonly used to exhort or command oneself and one’s associates. It is used “to urge someone to unite with the speaker in a course of action upon which he has already decided.” The typical translation, rather than *we should*, is *let us*.⁴

⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 464.