

The following article is a chapter from the church leadership training manual titled, "Building A Dynamic Church" by Randall Hillebrand. Copyright © 2008, 2011 by Randall J. Hillebrand. All rights reserved.

If you desire to download the manual in its entirety, please go to the following url:
<http://www.hillebrandministries.com/CompleteEnglishManualWithCovers.pdf>



APPENDIX:

Church Defined

The word "ekklesia" can be expressed as those who have been "called out" (Greek: "ek," out, and "kaleo," to call). Some understand this word as signifying believers in Christ who are called out by God from amongst unbelievers into an assembly, the church. Though this is theologically correct to say, there seems to be no grammatical or contextual support for this rendering. When Matthew used the word "ekklesia" in Matthew 16:18, he was not introducing a new word into the Greek language. Ekklesia was a word familiar to his audience, though he used it in a new context regarding the followers of Jesus and not in a civil context. Therefore the question is how this word was understood when it was used in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17.



One author stated, "The term ekklesia was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership. In general Greek usage it was normally a socio-political entity based upon citizenship in a city-state."¹ Therefore, due to its usage before, during and after the time of Christ, it is accurate to say that ekklesia is simply a group of people who are called out from their homes to an assembly. J. Strong concurs with this definition, for he said that this word describes "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly...an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating."² This is further supported by the fact that the word ekklesia is used in the Scriptures to describe a gathering of unbelievers (Acts 19:32,39,41), the nation of Israel (Acts 7:38), and as a "congregation" or "assembly" when talking about believers (Heb. 2:12). Therefore the word was used regarding both believers and unbelievers.

Ekklesia then defines those who are called out of their homes to an assembly. In the context of the local church, it is the redeemed of God through Christ who are

¹Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition) (Vol. 1, Page 125-126). New York: United Bible societies.

²Strong, J. (1996). The exhaustive concordance of the Bible: Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order. (electronic ed.) (G1577). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

called out to assemble or to congregate, this being the body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12). This term is also used in the New Testament to describe regional churches (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2), churches composed of a specific people group (Rom. 16:4; Col. 4:16), and of the universal church (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 10:32; Col. 3:15). [The universal church is defined as all true believers (1 Cor. 12:13) throughout the world (1 Cor. 10:32; 15:9) from the time of the crucifixion of Christ until the coming rapture of the church (Eph. 5:23c,25b), this period of time being referred to as the time of the Gentiles (cf. Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25).] Please note that none of the occurrences of the word "ekklesia" in the Bible are ever used to describe a physical building, only the redeemed people of God through Christ. Because this is true, this makes a sharp distinction between the physical building in which the church meets and the tabernacle and/or temple of Solomon in Old Testament times. God does not dwell within the walls of church buildings as He did within the holy of holies in the tabernacle (cf. Exo. 40:34-35; Lev. 16:2,13) or in the temple of Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 7:1-3; Ezek. 10:18) where the ark of the covenant was located (cf. Exo. 25:22; Num. 7:89). However, He does dwell within Christians during the church age; and it is they who together constitute the church, the body of Christ, the living, holy temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21).

Some terms used in the New Testament to describe the church are: the body (Eph. 3:6; 5:23), the household/house (Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5), temple (Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16), dwelling (Eph. 2:22), bride (Rev. 19:7; Eph. 5:24-27; "wife" in the Russian Synodal version), field (1 Cor. 3:9; cf. Heb. 6.7-8), holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5-9), chosen race (1 Pet. 2:9), holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9), people of God (1 Pet. 2:9) and flock (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2-3).