

A Word Study Demonstrating the Meaning of the word *Church*, ἐκκλησία, And Consequently the Nature of the New Testament Church

I. Preface

The nature of the church or *ekklesia* in Scripture is a matter of significant importance. Theologically liberal, Roman Catholic, neo-orthodox, and neo-evangelical commentators almost universally assume that *ekklesia* is at times a designation of all believers. Usually such an assumption is made without proof; indeed, this writer is not aware of any published study of the word *ekklesia* by an advocate of a universal, invisible church position that seeks to refute the local-only position. On the other hand, historic Baptists believe that the word *ekklesia* is either a reference to a particular congregation or is a generic noun, based on, in their opinion, the fact that *ekklesia* does not bear a reference to an unassembled association of all believers anywhere in the NT, confining the universal, invisible association of all believers to the terms *the family of God* and *the kingdom of God*, but not *the church of God*. In this conclusion these Baptists are correct; the word *ekklesia* does not refer to all believers in an unassembled union, but to either a particular congregation or to the *ekklesia* as a generic noun. As this is a key interpretive issue, the following word study of *ekklesia* provides the reasons why the line of interpretation by historic Baptists should be followed.

As a preface to the following study, it should be noted that there is no disagreement about the fact, held to by both universal and local-only views of the church, that in the future all believers will be assembled together in the heavenly city, so in a prospective sense, every believer has a place in a church/assembly that is to come. The disagreement is about whether all believers are not just prospectively in a single assembly, but whether such an assembly exists now, and all believers on the earth are currently part of a single, universal church. It should also be noted that the fact that there is a connection between soteriology and ecclesiology does not prove the universal church position, because true churches have a regenerate church membership and the NT assumes that those who are born again will be baptized and remain united to the church.

1.) Introduction: What is the church?

- a.) Loose views—church=a building or a denomination
- b.) Catholic view, expressed by Cyprian—“outside the church there is no salvation,” outside of the universal, visible denomination of those submitted to Rome.

This became the idea that all who were within the Roman empire, or a “Catholic country” in the Dark Ages and had received infant baptism, were able to be saved by doing good works. Nobody who is outside of this universal, visible institution could be saved. The word *catholic* means *universal*. The Roman Catholics take their name from their claim to be the universal, visible church.

The church is never called *universal* or *catholic* in Scripture. The designation first appears in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans 8:2, among a number of other unbiblical statements: “Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church. It is not permissible either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop. But whatever he approves is also pleasing to God, in order that everything you do may be trustworthy and valid” (ὅπου ἂν φανῆ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος, ἐκεῖ τὸ πλῆθος ἔστω, ὥσπερ ὅπου ἂν ᾦ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία. οὐκ ἐξόν ἐστιν χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν ἀλλ’ ὁ ἂν ἐκεῖνος δοκιμάσῃ, τοῦτο καὶ τῷ θεῷ εὐάρεστον, ἵνα ἀσφαλὲς ᾦ καὶ βέβαιον πᾶν ὃ πράσσετε). It is quite likely that this affirmation of the existence of a catholic church was a later interpolation into Ignatius’ epistle, if Ignatius actually wrote to the Smyrneans at all. There are three different recensions of Ignatius’ letters, a long, middle, and short version. The long version is generally recognized as a spurious fourth century forgery which projects later hierarchicalism and other developing Roman Catholic heresies into earlier centuries—indeed, it was the product of semi-Arianism that denied both the true equality of the Son to the Father and the true and complete humanity of Christ, and consequently destroyed the Biblical doctrine of redemption (pgs. 306-307, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, Aloys Grillmeier, trans. John Bowden). The short recension only exists in Syriac, and contains only the letters to the Ephesians, Romans, and Polycarp, in a version shorter than either the long or middle recensions. The middle recension, the version quoted above, is found in Greek in only one manuscript, the eleventh century Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus. Scholarship is divided about the genuineness of either the middle or short recensions, with some maintaining that all the letters are extremely heavily interpolated and others arguing that “Ignatius bishop of Antioch did not exist” (pg. 66, “Ignatian Problems,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, C. P. Hammond Bammel, 33:1 (April 1982); see the article, pgs. 62-97, for a discussion of various theories on the authenticity or forging of the allegedly Ignatian epistles.) Even if one assumes that Ignatius actually wrote something similar to the middle recension, and his writings were then corrupted and falsified into the long and short recensions, there is no reason to conclude that the eleventh century Greek codex of the middle recension referring to a “catholic church”

does not itself have numerous dogmatic interpolations designed to support later Roman Catholic dogmas—such as Smyrneans 8:2, the verse in question, and its reference to the catholic church—ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

“There are, in all, fifteen Epistles which bear the name of Ignatius. These are the following: One to the Virgin Mary, two to the Apostle John, one to Mary of Cassobelae, one to the Tarsians, one to the Antiochians, one to Hero, a deacon of Antioch, one to the Philippians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Magnesians, one to the Trallians, one to the Romans, one to the Philadelphians, one to the Smyrnaeans, and one to Polycarp. The first three exist only in Latin; all the rest are extant also in Greek. It is now the universal opinion of critics, that the first eight of these professedly Ignatian letters are spurious. They bear in themselves indubitable proofs of being the production of a later age than that in which Ignatius lived. Neither Eusebius nor Jerome makes the least reference to them; and they are now by common consent set aside as forgeries, which were at various dates, and to serve special purposes, put forth under the name of the celebrated Bishop of Antioch . . . [among the other epistles, a spurious long form, a middle recension, and a short recension exist, and] there was . . . a pretty prevalent opinion among scholars, that [no form] could . . . be regarded as absolutely free from interpolations, or as of undoubted authenticity. . . . This expression of uncertainty was repeated in substance by Jortin (1751), Mosheim (1755), Griesbach (1768), Rosenmüller (1795), Neander (1826), and many others; some going so far as to deny that we have any authentic remains of Ignatius at all, while others, though admitting the seven [middle recension] letters as being probably his, yet strongly suspected that they were not free from interpolation. . . . [T]he question [was reignited] by the discovery of a Syriac version [the short recension, first published in 1845] of three of these Epistles among the mss. procured from the monastery of St. Mary Deipara, in the desert of Nitria, in Egypt. . . . some accepted the [view that only these three short letters] represented more accurately than any formerly published what Ignatius had actually written . . . [while] others very strenuously opposed [this position in favor of the middle recension]. . . . [T]he Ignatian controversy is not yet settled” (*Church Fathers—The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, “Introductory Note to the Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians,” ed. Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. elec. acc. in *Accordance Bible Software*, prep. OakTree Software, ver. 1.1). While the reference to a catholic church by Ignatius is dubious, Pope Cornelius, writing against the Anabaptist Novatian, and developing a proto-Roman Catholic principle not found clearly before the third century, affirmed that there “should be but one bishop in a catholic church” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:43:11).

Let it also be briefly mentioned that it is indisputable that the so-called “Apostles’ Creed” was not written by the apostles, and its present form, with its profession of faith in a “catholic church,” is a development of the era after the union of proto-Popery with the Roman state. The “Apostles’ Creed” developed from the Old Roman Creed, which simply affirmed faith in the “holy church.” It was “in the late fourth century that *catholic* began to appear in [various] Western creeds” (pg. 385, *Early Christian Creeds*, J. N. D. Kelly. London: Longman, 1972. 3rd ed.), in large part to contrast the Roman church with dissident movements including the “heretical” Anabaptists of the age among the Donatists and Novatians. The earliest physical evidence for the Apostles’ Creed itself is contained in the tract *De singulis libris canonicis* written by the monk Priminius between A. D. 710-724. Both Pope Leo the Great (d. 461) and Gregory the Great (d. 604) appear to have been ignorant of the Creed, and among scholars “very few will be likely to deny that [the received version of the Apostles’ Creed] is to be sought somewhere north of the Alps at some date in the late sixth or seventh century” (pg. 398, 410, 421, *Early Christian Creeds*, *ibid.*).

c.) Protestant view—universal, invisible church. “The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 25). This view was a way for the Protestants to explain how they could be saved but be outside of the Catholic denomination. It came from Augustine, who used it to combat the Baptists of his day, the Donatists.

Augustine of Hippo, to combat the Donatists, among whom it appears the Baptists of his era were to be numbered and who contended for a regenerate church membership, held to the idea of an invisible catholic church before the era of the Reformation. He held that the invisible church was a smaller remnant of true believers entirely contained within the visible catholic church, developing this concept in order to justify the catholic practice of allowing obviously ungodly, immoral, and unregenerate members within the Catholic fold. However, Augustine held that the members of this invisible church were entirely contained within the bounds of the visible Catholic denomination—following Cyprian, Augustine held that outside of the visible church there was no salvation. When Protestantism adopted Augustine’s invisible church conception, it was adjusted—at least among the more evangelical wing of the reform movement—so that one could be part of the invisible church without the absolute necessity of membership in the visible church. In this manner the Reformation and post-Reformation doctrine of the universal, invisible church developed and became the view of evangelical Protestantism.

d.) Biblical/Baptist view—word *church* means *assembly* or *congregation*. That is it. CHRIST’S church is “an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the Lord’s work.” This is the view of Scripture. While the *family of God* is a universal, invisible entity that consists of all believers everywhere (Galatians 3:26), a *church* is a particular, local, visible congregation. It is noteworthy that historic Baptist confessions such as the 1833 *New Hampshire Confession*, “perhaps the most widely used and influential statement of doctrine among American Baptists at the present time” (*Baptist Confessions of Faith*, McGlothlin, part 4), make no mention of a universal church, speaking only of the church as local and visible.¹

2.) The church—

a.) Pre-NT usage²

B. H. Carroll’s book *Ecclesia*³ provides a number of helpful instances of the classical use of ἐκκλησία [transliterating the word as *ecclesia*], documenting that the word, in classical Greek, signified “an organized assembly of citizens, regularly summoned, as opposed to other meetings.” Note:

Thucydides 2:22: - “Pericles, seeing them angry at the present state of things... did not call them to an assembly (ecclesia) or any other meeting.”

Demosthenes 378, 24: - “When after this the assembly (ecclesia) adjourned, they came together and planned ... For the future still being uncertain, meetings and speeches of all sorts took place in the marketplace. They were afraid that an assembly (ecclesia) would be summoned suddenly, etc.”

¹ This is not to say that no Baptist confessions held to the Protestant doctrine of the church; ones that do so can be found (e. g., the *Second London Confession* of 1689, which was based on the Presbyterian Westminster Confession, and which is very influential among Calvinistic Baptists).

² Cf. the verb ἐκκλησιάζω, “to hold an assembly, *convene, assemble*.” (BDAG); “summon to an assembly” (Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996); “attend an assembly; attend a church service” (*Patristic Greek Lexicon* ed. G. W. Lampe (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, 20th ed). The verb is always employed in the LXX and related *Koiné* literature (at least until after the time of the post-NT development of the concept of a catholic church) for a visible and local assembly, not some sort of invisible and unassembled “assembly.” See Leviticus 8:3; Numbers 20:8; Deuteronomy 4:10; 31:12, 28; Esther 4:16, LXX; Josephus, *Antiquities* 4:302; 6:56; 8:277; 10:93; 12:316; 17:161; 19:158; *War* 2:490; 7:47; Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* 1:69; *On Joseph* 1:73; *On the Decalogue* 1:39; *Freedom* 1:6.

The complete list of LXX references:

Deuteronomy 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:2-4, 9; 31:30; Joshua 8:35; Judges 20:2; 21:5, 8; 1 Samuel 17:47; 19:20; 1 Kings 8:14, 22, 55, 65; 1 Chronicles 13:2, 4; 28:2, 8; 29:1, 10, 20; 2 Chronicles 1:3, 5; 6:3, 12-13; 7:8; 10:3; 20:5, 14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:23, 28, 31-32; 30:2, 4, 13, 17, 23-25; Ezra 2:64; 10:1, 8, 12, 14; Nehemiah 5:7, 13; 7:66; 8:2, 17; 13:1; Judith 6:16, 21; 7:29; 14:6; 1 Maccabees 2:56; 3:13; 4:59; 5:16; 14:19; Psalms 21:23, 26; 25:5, 12; 34:18; 39:10; 67:27; 88:6; 106:32; 149:1; Proverbs 5:14; Job 30:28; Sirach 15:5; 21:17; 23:24; 24:2; 26:5; 31:11; 33:19; 38:33; 39:10; 44:15; 46:7; 50:13, 20; Solomon 10:6; Micah 2:5; Joel 2:16; Lamentations 1:10.

³ The book is available at <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>. Carroll was Pastor of First Baptist Church of Waco, TX, Professor of theology and Bible at Baylor University and Seminary from 1872-1905, and professor and president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1908-1914.

Compare the distinction here between a lawfully assembled business body and a mere gathering together of the people in unofficial capacity, with the town-clerk's statement in Acts 19:35, 40. Now some instances of the particular *ecclesia* of the several Greek states -
 Thucydides 1,87: - "Having said such things, he himself, since he was ephor, put the question to vote in the assembly (*ecclesia*) of the Spartans."
 Thucydides 1,139: - "And the Athenians having made a house (or called an assembly, *ecclesia*) freely exchanged their sentiments."
 Aristophanes Act 169: - "But I forbid you calling an assembly (*ecclesia*) for the Thracians about pay."
 Thucydides 6,8: - "And the Athenians having convened an assembly (*ecclesia*) ... voted, etc."
 Thucydides 6,2: - "And the Syracusans having buried their dead, summoned an assembly (*ecclesia*)."
 This historical reading concerning the business assemblies of the several petty but independent, self-governing Greek states, with their lawful conference, their free speech. Their decision by vote, whether of Spartans, Thracians, Syracusans or Athenians, sounds much like the proceedings of particular and independent Baptist churches today (*Ecclesia*, B. H. Carroll, pgs. 35-36).

This examination of the classical Greek background is valuable because Christ and the Apostles spoke the Greek language of the day. When they used the word *ekklesia*, *church*, they did not pull the word out of thin air, but used a word that was already in use in the first century. Nor is there any indication in Scripture that they gave the word a radical new meaning that it never had before—and, indeed, to make a word that means *assembly* signify a group of people all over the world that never assemble would be a very radical change of meaning. So with this background, let us look at what the NT itself says about the *church*, *congregation*, or *assembly*.

b.) NT usage:

We will see that all of these uses fit into one of two categories—either they are actual, individual congregations, or the word *church* is used as a *generic* noun, a reference to every church in general, but no church in particular. These latter texts are the ones that the universal church people use to seek support for their doctrine in the Bible.

Concerning the category of generic noun:

The small minority of uses where an individual congregation in a particular location is not in view (cf. "Christ is the head of the church," Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18) do not prove the existence of a universal, invisible church any more than "the husband is the head of the wife" or "the head of the woman is the man" (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3; see below) establish that there is a single universal, invisible husband or a universal,

invisible man made up of all individual husbands or men scattered all over world. Rather, these verses employ the word *church* as a generic noun, as a reference to any or every particular church (or husband, man, etc.) in the class *church* (husband, man, etc.). The common category of the “generic noun . . . focuses on the kind. . . emphasizes class traits . . . [and] has in view . . . the class as a whole” (pg. 244, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, Daniel B. Wallace. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

Matt. 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my **church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

-True for the first church at Jerusalem—Christ “built” or “built [it] up” (the word is even translated “edify,” that is “build up/build.” It is also true for His churches in general; Christ builds each of them up.

In Christ’s statement in Matthew 16:18 that He will build up His congregation, the word *ekklesia* is used as a generic noun. It is true for each individual church, but it does not prove that every congregation is somehow one large congregation that never congregates. Compare the following example of *ekklesia* as a generic noun in Plato:

[452e] Gorgias

I call it the ability to persuade with speeches either judges in the law courts or statesmen in the council-chamber or the commons in **the Assembly** or an audience at any other meeting that may be held on public affairs. And I tell you that by virtue of this power you will have the doctor as your slave, and the trainer as your slave; your money-getter will turn out to be making money not for himself, but for another,—in fact for you, who are able to speak and persuade the multitude.⁴

[452e] Γοργίας

τὸ πείθειν ἔγωγ’ οἶόν τ’ εἶναι τοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ δικαστὰς καὶ ἐν βουλευτηρίῳ βουλευτὰς καὶ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐκκλησιαστὰς καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ συλλόγῳ παντί, ὅστις ἂν πολιτικὸς σύλλογος γίγνηται. καίτοι ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ

⁴ Plato. (1967). *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 3 translated by W.R.M. Lamb*. Medford, MA: Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd.

δυνάμει δούλον μὲν ἔξεις τὸν ἰατρόν, δούλον δὲ τὸν παιδοτρίβην· ὁ δὲ χρηματιστὴς οὗτος ἄλλω ἀναφανήσεται χρηματιζόμενος καὶ οὐχ αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ σοὶ τῷ δυναμένῳ λέγειν καὶ πείθειν τὰ πλήθη.⁵

In this statement, “the assembly/*ekklesia*” is not speaking of one particular individual assembly, but it is also hardly speaking of all the assemblies together being one big universal assembly. Rather, the statement is true for each individual assembly. “The council-chamber” and “the commons” are used in the same way. All the council-chambers are not one big, invisible, universal council-chamber; rather, the type of speech Plato is talking about is persuasive is employed in any particular council-chamber.

Note that the difference between *Christ’s ekklesia*/church/congregation/assembly and other congregations/assemblies is NOT that they are some radically different thing; the difference is in the MY, not in the word *church/congregation*. If I have a pencil and you have a pencil, the difference between the two is that one is MY pencil, but both yours and mine are pencils. This is *Christ’s church/congregation*, as opposed to a pagan congregation or assembly, etc. but it is still an assembly/congregation that He would build up. (BTW, note also that the church already existed here, and in Matthew 18:17; lots of people today say the church started at Pentecost, but, at least in a fundamental sense, Christ started the church in the gospels.⁶).

⁵ Plato. (1903). *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet. Medford, MA: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Christ started His church during His earthly ministry (Matthew 18:17) from people converted and baptized by John the Baptist (John 1:35-37) and promised that His assembly would overcome the powers of hell from that time to the end of the age (Matthew 16:18). Obviously already extant, the church was “added unto” on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47) with the conversion of three thousand men. No verse anywhere states that the church started on Pentecost. The Lord referred to His church twice in the gospels (Matthew 16:18; 18:17), without any indication whatever that it did not yet exist. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, had the church as His bride before Pentecost (John 3:29; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-33). “God hath set . . . in the church, first apostles” (1 Corinthians 12:28), but the Lord appointed the apostles far before Pentecost (Mark 3:13-19; Matthew 10:2-4). Christ sang in the midst of the church (Hebrews 2:12), but His only recorded singing took place at the institution of the Lord’s supper (Matthew 26:30)—an ordinance given to the church before Pentecost (Matthew 26:26-31; 1 Corinthians 11:2, 17-34). Before Pentecost Christ was the shepherd/pastor of His church (John 10:14), which was already His flock (a term for the church; Matthew 26:31; Luke 12:32; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:2-3), until He appointed Peter to pastor His first assembly after His resurrection (John 21:15-17). His church had a business meeting (Acts 1:15-26), a membership roll (Acts 1:15), a treasurer (John 12:6; 13:29), baptism (John 4:1-2), the Lord’s supper (Matthew 26:26-31), church discipline (Matthew 18:15-18), the power to bind and loose (Matthew 18:17-18), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) before it was “added unto” on Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47). On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the church simply received the permanent indwelling of the Spirit and public recognition as the new institution for the course of the age of grace (cf. Exodus 40:35; the tabernacle; 2 Chronicles 7:1; Solomon’s temple; Ezekiel 43:4-5; the Millennial temple).

In relation to the only really significant objection to a pre-Pentecost foundation of the church, the question of how the assembly could begin before the official inauguration of the New Covenant with the

Matt. 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the **church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

-obviously a very visible, local church must be told about church discipline, not some universal, invisible church. The phrase “the church” here refers to whatever particular church the people in conflict are members of.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the **church** daily such as should be saved.

-a very visible, local church in Jerusalem.

Acts 5:11 And great fear came upon all the **church**, and upon as many as heard these things.

-church at Jerusalem.

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the **church** in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

-when Israel was in the wilderness, they were a congregation/assembly/ “church.” They were all assembled in one place camping in the wilderness. This is not a reference to

death of Christ, Dr. Ron Tottingham writes, “[The objectors ask how] could you have a ‘new program’ (church) until you have the shedding of the ‘the blood of the covenant,’ of He who is the Life and Head of a ‘new and living’ institution? . . . Hebrews 9:14-18 . . . What is the answer which those . . . would give . . . who would hold that Christ established the first Church during His personal ministry upon earth[?] . . . The New Testament Church [was not] ‘of force’ [Hebrews 9:17] until after the Resurrection. Even Christ still went to the temple [during His earthly ministry]. . . . Hebrews nine only states that the covenant of the Levitical ordinances lasted until the true Blood of Christ was shed. . . . The New Testament Church could not be ready for service at its ‘baptism’ at Pentecost unless it was built, or ‘framed,’ prior. Who ever heard of moving into a house [cf. 1 Peter 2:5] (the Holy Spirit moved upon and into the church at Pentecost) without a floor, frame, and more? . . . How then could the church begin before the New Covenant began? By being built [by] the Master Himself during His own personal ministry upon the earth. Then when he died as Testator of the New Covenant, His church of the New Testament (covenant) was ready and waiting to be ‘baptized’ [with] the Holy Spirit and begin [its] ordained service” (*The Door-Step Evangel*, 24:2 (March-April 2008) pgs. 1ff. (pub. Empire Baptist Temple/Great Plains Baptist Divinity School, Sioux Falls, SD)).

CHRIST's NT congregation/church, but to Israel as a congregation camping around Mt. Sinai.

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the **church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

-obviously local and visible.

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the **church**, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

-church at Jerusalem.

Acts 9:31 Then had the **churches** rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

—note plural churchES. It was not “the church throughout all Judaea,” etc. but the churchES.

Acts 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the **church** which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

-church at Jerusalem.

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the **church**, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

-church at Antioch.

Acts 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the **church**.

-the church at Jerusalem in the context.

Acts 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the **church** unto God for him.

-likewise the church at Jerusalem in context.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in the **church** that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

-church at Antioch.

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every **church**, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

—churches Paul and Barnabas started.

Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the **church** together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

-church at Antioch.

Acts 15:3 And being brought on their way by the **church**, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

--the church at Anioch sent them forth.

Acts 15:4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the **church**, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

-the church at Jerusalem.

Acts 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole **church**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

-the church at Jerusalem.

Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the **churches**.

Acts 16:5 And so were the **churches** established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

-obviously local and visible.

Acts 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the **church**, he went down to Antioch.

-church at Caesarea.

Acts 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the **assembly** was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

-This is a valuable use of the word *ekklesia* for what is clearly not a Christian gathering. Here the word is used for an assembly/congregation/“church” of idolators who were worshipping an idol. This was a congregation or assembly, most certainly—but it was not Christ’s “MY church.” And it was very local and visible!

Acts 19:39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful **assembly**.

-likewise here, as in the next reference, it is the same “assembly” of idolators.

Acts 19:41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the **assembly**.

Ditto.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the **church**.

Elders of the church at Ephesus.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the **church** of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

This is the particular church at Ephesus, to the elders of which Paul is speaking. To say that only some universal church can be called “the church of God” is nonsense. The local, visible congregation of saints is the church of God! The church where we are assembled today is the very church of God. Look not, brethren, to some other for the alleged “true” church. You are in it now. Look around! See it! Glory in it—this assembly was purchased with the blood of Christ! How highly do you value it?

Rom. 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the **church** which is at Cenchrea:

-congregation at Cenchrea.

Rom. 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the **churches** of the Gentiles.

-assemblies/congregations of the Gentiles.

Rom. 16:5 Likewise *greet* the **church** that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

-an assembly in someone’s house. (Here it is very obvious that the “church” is not the building! How do you greet/salute the building inside someone’s house?)

Rom. 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The **churches** of Christ salute you.

-plural local, visible churches.

Rom. 16:23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole **church**, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

-the whole church where Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus were, which was the church at Corinth, where Paul wrote the letter/epistle to the Romans.

1Cor. 1:2 Unto the **church** of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

Consider this with Acts 20:28—the church at Corinth, with all the problems that it had, was the very “church of God”!

1Cor. 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every **church**.

-every local, visible church where Paul was.

1Cor. 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the **church**.

-least esteemed in the church at Corinth.

1Cor. 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all **churches**.

-all local and visible churches.

1Cor. 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the **church** of God:

-Probably the church at Corinth, where they were—this was the “church of God” in 1:2 of this epistle. If not, then to the church considered generally—do not give offense to any church in general, to any local congregation.

1Cor. 11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the **churches** of God.

-none of the true churches had this bad custom.

1Cor. 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the **church**, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

-the church at Corinth.

1Cor. 11:22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the **church** of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

-here, for the third time in the epistle, the congregation at Corinth is called “the church of God.”

1Cor. 12:28 And God hath set some in the **church**, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

-here the church in general, the church as an institution.

1Cor. 14:4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the **church**.

-the church where he is prophesying is edified.

1Cor. 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the **church** may receive edifying.

-just like in 14:4.

1Cor. 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the **church**.

-the church where the gifts are being exercised.

1Cor. 14:19 Yet in the **church** I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.

-the church where the speaking is going on.

1Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole **church** be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

-the whole congregation is in one place.

1Cor. 14:28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the **church**; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

-the congregation where he is to keep silence.

1Cor. 14:33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all **churches** of the saints.

-not the author of confusion in any of the churches.

1Cor. 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the **churches**: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

-women were commanded to be submissive in all churches.

1Cor. 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the **church**.

-the church where the women and their husbands attend.

1Cor. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the **church** of God.

-here the church at Jerusalem is called the church of God—the members of this church are the ones Paul had a commission to persecute in Acts. One could say that it is the members of every church in general, no church in particular (generic use), but it would still prove zero about something universal and invisible. Try persecuting something invisible sometime.

1Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the **churches** of Galatia, even so do ye.

-churches in the region of Galatia.

1Cor. 16:19 The **churches** of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

-churches in the region of Asia.

2Cor. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the **church** of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

-church in Corinth.

2Cor. 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the **churches** of Macedonia;

-churches in the region of Macedonia. (Not single, “church.”)

2Cor. 8:18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the **churches**;

-local, visible churches.

2Cor. 8:19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the **churches** to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

-churches agreed that this brother was to travel with Paul.

2Cor. 8:23 Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of, they are* the messengers of the **churches**, and the glory of Christ.

-the brethren were messengers from the churches.

2Cor. 8:24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the **churches**, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

-local, visible churches.

2Cor. 11:8 I robbed other **churches**, taking wages *of them*, to do you service.

-other churches than the one at Corinth.

2Cor. 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the **churches**.

-all the churches Paul worked with, it seems. Note not “all the universal church,” but “churches.”

2Cor. 12:13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other **churches**, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

-other churches than Corinth.

Gal. 1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the **churches** of Galatia:

-churches in the region of Galatia.

Gal. 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the **church** of God, and wasted it:

-the church at Jerusalem that Paul was persecuting. If one wanted to make it a generic reference, that would be fine, but it is probably the Jerusalem assembly.

Gal. 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the **churches** of Judaea which were in Christ:

-churches in the region of Judea.

Eph. 1:22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the **church**,

-Christ is the head to each particular church. A generic reference.

Eph. 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the **church** the manifold wisdom of God,

-the church as an institution, a generic reference, that the wisdom of God is made known in each particular church.

Eph. 3:21 Unto him *be* glory in the **church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

-every church is to give glory to Jesus Christ.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the **church**: and he is the saviour of the body.

-this, and the other texts in Ephesians 5, are good illustrations of the generic use of nouns. “The husband,” “the wife,” and “the church” are generic nouns. There is no universal husband or universal, invisible wife, and there is no universal, invisible church here either. Each husband is the head of his own wife, and Christ is the head of each church.

Similarly, in Colossians 1:18, the phrase ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας both σώματος and ἐκκλησίας are generic nouns, just as in Ephesians 5:23⁷ ἀνὴρ, κεφαλὴ, γυναικός, ἐκκλησίας, and σώματος are generic in reference (cf. Wallace, pgs. 253-254, for a variety of other examples). Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 5:23 do not teach the doctrine of a universal, invisible church—such a concept

⁷ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body, ὅτι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικός, ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος.

is not either approved or rejected in either passage. They simply state that Christ is the head of the church generically, that is, of every particular local, visible church. Each particular church is identified as the body of Christ in this text (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27, where the particular church at Corinth is called the body of Christ—the body metaphor emphasizes that each member of the assembly, as a different and important body part, needs to minister to the other members of his particular congregation in accordance with his God-given gifting), and each church has Christ as her head. “The husband is the head of the wife” hardly means that all the husbands in the world are one universal, invisible husband who is the head of one universal, invisible wife. “Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20, ποῦ σοφός; ποῦ γραμματεὺς; ποῦ συζητητῆς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου;) hardly means that all the wise men in the world are one universal, invisible wise man, nor that there is one universal, invisible scribe or disputer. No more does “Christ is the head of the church” affirm that Christ is the head of a universal, invisible church; the text teaches that Christ is the head of each particular church, just as the particular husband is the head of his particular wife. Advocates of the universal, invisible church must find one or more undisputably clear references where *ekklesia* does not mean either a particular congregation or is employed as a generic noun, or they cannot affirm that their doctrine is Biblical. Since they are the ones who are affirming that *ekklesia* assumes a sense it does not have in any pre-Christian literature, they bear the burden of proof in demonstrating that their doctrine is clearly in the NT. The attempt fails in Ephesians 5:23, and in every other text in the NT—consequently the NT does not teach the existence of a universal, invisible church.

More extensive material on this:

Examining Ephesians 5:23 somewhat more deeply, the phrase “Christ is the head of the church” is one of the very few passages that advocates of a universal church employ support their doctrine. Apart from the fact that the verse uses the noun *church* in a generic sense, one should compare the following New Testament texts:

Ephesians 5:23: ὅτι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικός, ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ αὐτός ἐστι σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος. For **the husband is the head of the wife**, even as **Christ is the head of the church**; and he is the saviour of the body,

1Corinthians 11:3: θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι, ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικός, ὁ ἀνὴρ· κεφαλὴ δὲ Χριστοῦ, ὁ Θεός. But I would have you know, that **the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man**; and the head of Christ *is* God.

The singular nouns “the husband” “the wife” “the woman” “the man” imply zero about a universal, invisible husband, wife, woman, or man. Absolutely nothing affirms the existence of a universal

church in the phrase “Christ is the head of the church.” The Lord Jesus is the head of every particular local, visible congregation.

Note also 2 Kings 10:6, LXX:

καὶ ἔγραψεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς βιβλίον δεύτερον λέγων εἰ ἐμοὶ ὑμεῖς καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ὑμεῖς εἰσακούετε λάβετε **τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνδρῶν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ κυρίου ὑμῶν** καὶ ἐνέγκατε πρὸς με ὡς ἡ ὥρα αὐριον εἰς Ιεζραελ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ βασιλέως ἦσαν ἐβδομήκοντα ἄνδρες οὗτοι ἄδρῳ τῆς πόλεως ἐξέτρεφον αὐτούς And Ju wrote them a second letter, saying, If ye *are* for me, and hearken to my voice, **take the heads [Gk. singular, “head”] of the men your master’s sons**, and bring *them* to me at this time to-morrow in Jezrael. Now the sons of the king were seventy men; these great men of the city brought them up. (Brenton’s LXX translation—also below).

Nothing at all is implied about anything universal or invisible with the singular. Each son had his own particular head (until he lost it!). “the head of the sons” is teaches nothing other than that each son had his own head. So “Christ is the head of the church” teaches that Christ is the head of each particular church. Compare 2 Kings 10: 8, where the plural is used:

καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ ἄγγελος καὶ ἀπήγγειλεν λέγων ἤνεγκαν **τὰς κεφαλὰς τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ βασιλέως** καὶ εἶπεν θέτε αὐτὰς βουνοὺς δύο παρὰ τὴν θύραν τῆς πύλης εἰς πρωί. And a messenger came and told *him*, saying, They have brought **the heads of the king’s sons**. And he said, Lay them *in* two heaps by the door of the gate until the morning.

Psalm 139:10, LXX (Eng. 140:9):

ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ κυκλώματος αὐτῶν κόπος τῶν χειλέων αὐτῶν καλύψει αὐτούς. *As for the head of them that compass me*, the mischief of their lips shall cover them.

Note that both the Greek translated “them that compass” and “the head” are both singular nouns, just as in “Christ is the head of the church.” Each particular head of each particular enemy surrounding David would be judged.

Lamentations 2:15, LXX:

ἐκρότησαν ἐπὶ σὲ χεῖρας πάντες οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ὁδὸν **ἐσύρισαν καὶ ἐκίνησαν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν** ἐπὶ τὴν θυγατέρα Ιερουσαλημ ἡ αὕτη ἡ πόλις ἦν ἐροῦσιν στέφανος δόξης εὐφροσύνη πάσης τῆς γῆς. All that go by the way have clapped their hands at thee; **they have hissed and shaken their head** at the daughter of Jerusalem. Is this the city, they say, the crown of joy of all the earth?

Note that the plurality, the “all” shake the singular “head.” There was no universal, invisible head or universal, invisible person opposing Jerusalem. Each person shook his own particular head at Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 1:22, LXX:

καὶ ὁμοίωμα ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτοῖς τῶν ζῴων ὡσεὶ στερέωμα ὡς ὄρασις κρυστάλλου ἐκτεταμένον ἐπὶ τῶν πτερύγων αὐτῶν ἐπάνωθεν. And **the likeness over the heads [Gk. singular] of the living creatures** was as a firmament, as the appearance of crystal, spread out over their wings above.

“The head of the living creatures” meant that each particular living creature had its own particular head.

Ezekiel 10:1, LXX:

καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπάνω τοῦ στερεώματος τοῦ ὑπὲρ **κεφαλῆς τῶν χερουβιν** ὡς λίθος σαπφείρου ὁμοίωμα θρόνου ἐπ’ αὐτῶν. And the likeness over **the heads** [Gk. singular] **of the living creatures** was as a firmament, as the appearance of crystal, spread out over their wings above.

“The head of the living creatures,” again, means each living creature had its own particular head.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4:112 (4.6.4.112)

Καὶ ὁ μὲν ταῦτα τοῦ θεοῦ κελεύσαντος ἤκει πρὸς Βάλακον δεξαμένου δὲ αὐτὸν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκπρεπῶς ἠξίου προαχθεὶς ἐπὶ τι τῶν ὄρων σκέψασθαι πῶς τὸ τῶν Ἑβραίων ἔχου στρατόπεδον Βάλακος δ’ αὐτὸς ἀφικνεῖται τὸν μάντιν σὺν βασιλικῇ θεραπείᾳ φιλοτίμως ἀγόμενος εἰς **ὄρος ὄπερ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτῶν** ἔκειτο τοῦ στρατοπέδου σταδίου ἀπέχον ἑξήκοντα. When God had given him this charge, he came to Balak; and when the king had entertained him in a magnificent manner, he desired him to go to one of the mountains to take a view of the state of the camp of the Hebrews. Balak himself also came to the mountain, and brought the prophet along with him, with a royal attendance. **This mountain lay over their heads** [Gk. singular], and was distant sixty furlongs from the camp.

The singular mountain was over each person, each of whom had his own particular head.

Gospel of Peter 10:40:

καὶ **τῶν μὲν δύο τὴν κεφαλὴν χωροῦσαν μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ**, τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγουμένου ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ὑπερβαίνουσιν τοὺς οὐρανοὺς. [A]nd **the heads** [Gk. singular] **of the two reaching to heaven**, but that of him who was led by them by the hand overpassing the heavens.

Each particular individual here had his own particular head.

Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 1:71:

ὡσπερ οὖν **κεφαλὴ μὲν πρῶτον τοῦ ζώου καὶ ἀνωτάτω μέρος ἐστί**. For as **the head is the principle and uppermost part of the animal**,

Each singular animal had its own singular head. There was no universal head of a universal, invisible animal.

Philo, *On The Life of Moses* 2:290:

θαυμάσια μὲν οὖν ταῦτα: θαυμασιώτατον δὲ καὶ τὸ τέλος τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων, ὃ καθάπερ **ἐν τῷ ζῷ κεφαλὴ** τῆς ὅλης νομοθεσίας ἐστίν. These things, therefore, are wonderful; and most wonderful of all is the end of his sacred writings, which is to the whole book of the law what **the head is to an animal**.

Likewise here, each animal had its own head.

Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments* 125:

ταῦτα δ' ἀλληγορεῖται τροπικῶς ἐξενεχθέντα· καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ζῳῷ κεφαλὴ μὲν πρῶτον καὶ ἄριστον, οὐρὰ δ' ὕστατον καὶ φαυλότατον, οὐ μέρος συνεκπληροῦν τὸν τῶν μελῶν ἀριθμὸν, ἀλλὰ σόβησις τῶν ἐπιποτωμένων, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον κεφαλὴν μὲν τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους ἔσεσθαί φησι τὸν σπουδαῖον εἴτε ἄνδρα εἴτε λαόν, τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἅπαντας οἷον μέρη σώματος ψυχούμενα ταῖς ἐν κεφαλῇ καὶ ὑπεράνω δυνάμεσιν. But all these statements are uttered in a metaphorical form, and contain an allegorical meaning. For **as in an animal the head** is the first and best part, and the tail the last and worst part, or rather no part at all, inasmuch as it does not complete the number of the limbs, being only a broom to sweep away what flies against it; so in the same manner what is said here is that **the virtuous man shall be the head of the human race whether he be a single man or a whole people**. And that all others, being as it were parts of the body, are only vivified by the powers existing in the head and superior portions of the body.

This very interesting reference by Philo shows that, as in a single animal there is a single head, so “the virtuous man,” a generic noun, not one particular man named X, is “the head of the human race,” and this is whether he “be a single man or the whole people.” The others are as “parts of the body,” are only “vivified” because of “the head” that is “the virtuous man.” The parallel to Christ as the head of the church is very clear. Nobody would think of saying that there is literally one universal, invisible virtuous man, nor that there is one universal, invisible body of people, since Philo’s point is that whether one speaks of a single man, or a group of any size, in both situations the [generic] virtuous man is the [generic] head.

Ephesians 5:23 is the capstone of the very small number of New Testament texts that advocates of a universal church position believe provide support for their doctrine. However, the passage teaches nothing of the kind. It simply affirms that Christ is the head of every particular church, just as each particular husband is the head of his particular wife. There are no verses in the Bible where the noun *ekklesia*, church/assembly/congregation, refers to all believers as an already existing group.

Eph. 5:24 Therefore as the **church** is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

-generic noun, as above.

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the **church**, and gave himself for it;

-Christ loved each particular church. He loved this church, and gave Himself for her in a special way. This shows us how highly we should love this church. This is how much Christ loved her!

Eph. 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious **church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

-This is what Christ is going to do to this church!

Eph. 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the **church**:

-again, an institutional use. Note that the church is Christ's body, flesh, and bones from the next verse. We are going to talk about the body metaphor shortly.

Eph. 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the **church**.

-generic reference.

Phil. 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the **church**; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

-the church at Jerusalem, which Paul received authority to persecute. (You could make it generic if you want, but there is no need.)

Phil. 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no **church** communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

-no particular church.

Col. 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the **church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

-Christ is the head of each church. (generic use of the word).

Col. 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the **church**:

Another generic use; each church is Christ's body.

Col. 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the **church** which is in his house.

The particular church at Nymphas' house.

Col. 4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the **church** of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

-church of the Laodiceans.

1Th. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the **church** of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-church at the city of Thessalonica.

1Th. 2:14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the **churches** of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

-churches in the region of Judaea.

2Th. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the **church** of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

-church of the Thessalonians.

2Th. 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the **churches** of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

-churches of God are local, visible churches.

1Tim. 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the **church** of God?)

“the church of God” that the man in the context is a bishop/overseer/pastor of.

1Tim. 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the **church** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

-the church of God that has bishops/overseers and deacons, vv. 1-14! Thus local, visible church is the “house” or temple of God, and the pillar and ground of the truth.

1Tim. 5:16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the **church** be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

-the church with the widows.

Philem. 2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the **church** in thy house:

-church in Philemon’s house (see v. 1)

Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the **church** will I sing praise unto thee.

-This is the pre-Pentecost church/congregation, the one Christ started while on earth. This is the only one that He sang in, after He built up/edified the church by giving her the Lord’s supper, Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26.

Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and **church** of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Here we have a reference to the future assembly of all believers in heaven. But at that time, they will all be in one place again, and be local and visible in the heavenly City!⁸

⁸ Thus, the uses of the word in the LXX and other pre-Christian works supports the evidence from the instances of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament itself that the word always signifies a particular, visible assembly. “[A]n inductive study of all the *ecclesia* passages [in the LXX demonstrates] that in the Septuagint it never means ‘all Israel whether assembled or unassembled, but that *in every instance* it means

James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the **church**; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

-elders of the church where he is.

3John 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the **church**: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

-the church where people are bearing witness of the charity.

3John 9 I wrote unto the **church**: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

-the church where Diotrephes was.

3John 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the **church**.

-Likewise.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven **churches** which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

-seven churches in Asia. Who are they? See the following references.

a gathering together, and assembly. . . . [T]he New Testament writers neither coined this word nor employed it in an unusual sense. The apostles and early Christians . . . wrote in Greek to a Greek-speaking world, and used Greek words as a Greek-speaking people would understand them. . . . [I]t is a fiction that *ecclesia* was used in [the New Testament in] any new, special sense. The object of Christ's *ecclesia*, and terms of membership in it, were indeed different from those of the classic or Septuagint *ecclesia*. But the word itself retains its ordinary meaning. . . . [In contrast to *ecclesia*], the word *panegyros* [was employed to designate] a general, festive assembly of all the Greek states. This general assembly was not for war but peace . . . not for business but pleasure—a time of peace, and joy, and glory. In the happy Greek conceit all the heavenly beings were supposed to be present [at the *panegyros*]. How felicitously does [Paul] adapt himself to the Greek use of the word [in Hebrews 12:23], and glorify it by application to the final heavenly state. . . . [Thus, there] is a general assembly . . . [in heaven where] warfare is over and rest has come [designated by *panegyros*, but never by *ecclesia*].” (pgs. 34-36, *Ecclesia*, Carroll).

Rev. 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven **churches** which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Rev. 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven **churches**: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Rev. 2:1 Unto the angel of the **church** of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Rev. 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Rev. 2:8 And unto the angel of the **church** in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Rev. 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:12 And to the angel of the **church** in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Rev. 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

Rev. 2:18 And unto the angel of the **church** in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

Rev. 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the **churches** shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Rev. 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the **church** in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Rev. 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 3:7 And to the angel of the **church** in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Rev. 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 3:14 And unto the angel of the **church** of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Rev. 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the **churches**. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.

-Here in this last reference, it is, again, obviously the actual seven churches from before.

c.) The word illustrated by metaphors

The major metaphors for the church also demonstrate that the idea of a universal, invisible church is false. The church is Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27), His temple (1 Timothy 3:15), and His bride (2 Corinthians 11:2).⁹ Bodies are very local and visible—a bunch of flesh and bones scattered around the globe is not a body. A temple is in one particular location, available for everyone to see; bricks scattered all over the place are not a building at all. And certainly every man on his wedding day rejoices that his bride is very local and visible, not invisible or cut into little pieces which are scattered all over the earth! Christ's church is not a building, a denomination, or something universal and invisible; it is a particular assembly of baptized saints.

So when people say that “the body of Christ” is all believers all over the world, they actually are espousing something that cannot be true. How can a body actually be a body if it is not in a particular location? In 1 Corinthians 12:13-27, Paul's point is unity in the congregation. The passage makes no sense if the body is anything other than the church at Corinth to which Paul is writing. 1 Cor 12:27 gives the only definition of the body of Christ metaphor, and it is defined as the church at Corinth, as “ye are the body of Christ” is written to “the church at Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2), where there were divisions that

⁹ It is true that the bride metaphor is employed for the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-3) as a synecdoche for all the people of God who will inhabit it. However, at that time they will all be present in the future heavenly festive assembly (Hebrews 12:23). There will indeed be this coming gathering of all the saints to the eternal heavenly City, but it will still be quite local and visible, it does not yet exist, and it certainly does not prove that saved people on earth in the United States, Colombia, Vietnam, and the Central African Republic are somehow currently members of the same, never-assembling and invisible congregation, assembly, church, or *ekklesia*.

needed to be corrected by each church member fitting into that assembly where he was a member (1 Cor 1). It is noteworthy that Clement, the third pastor of the church at Rome, writing to the church at Corinth c. A. D. 100, also employed the metaphor of the body of Christ as a reference to the particular, visible assembly (cf. “Images of the Church in 1 Clement,” Thomas Ross; <http://faithsaves.net>). Furthermore, there cannot be both the visible assembly as Christ’s body and a universal, invisible body, for there is only one type of body, just as there is only one type of baptism (Ephesians 4:4-5). Either the visible assembly is Christ’s body or the alleged universal church is Christ’s body. 1 Corinthians 12:27 proves that the visible assembly is Christ’s body. Therefore, the mythical universal “church” is not Christ’s body.

We have thus very clearly proven the Catholic and Protestant doctrines of the church are wrong. The word *ekklesia* means congregation or assembly—it is something very local, particular, and visible. The NT use fits with the pre-NT use. The difference in the Biblical church is that Christ says, “MY church”—it is an assembly that is His, not some other kind of assembly or congregation. The local, visible only view is also very evident from the uses of the word in the NT. It is evident from the Scriptural metaphors for the church as body, temple, and bride. The idea that all believers everywhere is one big universal church, whether visible or invisible, is a product of Roman Catholic history, not of NT doctrine. It developed out of the idea that outside of the church there is no salvation.

3.) Application

a.) The church does not save, contra the Catholic and Protestant views. You do not join any church in order to be saved. You do not join a visible, universal church to be saved, like Catholicism states. You do not join an invisible universal church to be saved, like Protestantism teaches. You must first be saved, and then you join the kind of church that is in the Bible, a local, visible congregation, by being baptized.

b.) Catholic/Protestant groups are not churches, cannot baptize, and do not have the special presence of Christ. There is, actually, in the book of Revelation an image that is set in contrast to the bride of Jesus Christ—the whore of Babylon. This is the one world religious system that will dominate the world in the Tribulation period, that is centered at Rome. The church of Rome is a partial fulfillment of this harlot.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5 And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

I would point out that this harlot has daughters, Rev 17:5, and the Protestant groups came out of Rome. (cf. the imagery of Babylon as a mother with daughters in Jeremiah 50:12; Hosea 2:2-5; contrast Galatians 4:26); The *Word Biblical Commentary* on Rev 17:5 notes: “the term μήτηρ, “mother,” is a figurative extension that means something like “archetype,” i.e., something “anticipating a later reality and suggesting a derivative relationship.”

You want a true church of Christ? Look around, view the assembly of the saints in which you are, if you are in a historic Baptist church. Such a church is the body of Christ. It is the holy temple of the Lord. It is the pure and holy bride of Christ.

c.) All non-Baptist religious societies and denominations have no right to exist. I am glad for whatever good is done there, Mark 9:38-40. Nevertheless, they should shut down and all their members should be baptized into independent Baptist churches. Christ only has one institution in this age—the kind of church He started in the first century. He is not pleased with any other “churches” that compete with His church. I would be very displeased with anyone who did anything that tried to hurt my wife, and with anyone who tried to move her out of my house and start doing what she is doing. God does not want His people committing spiritual adultery with organizations outside of His church. The command for all believers is, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev 18:4) and join one of the Lord’s true churches.

c.) Rev 1:13; 2:1—Christ in the midst of His churches.

i.) The church is better than the holy of holies in the tabernacle.

a.) Consider the glorious implications of the metaphors for the church. “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife,

and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:29-32). What a union with Christ is this! What closeness as to be Christ’s body! What love and fellowship as being His bride! “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:20-22). If you are a member of this church, you are a very living stone in the glorious, spiritual temple of God for this age!

ii.) Join the church. No free-hanging body parts! If you are saved but not part of the church, you are not in the body of Christ, you are not part of the temple of the Lord, and you are not part of Christ’s bride on earth (although all Christians will be part of the bride in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2)). Oh, what glory you are missing out on! Why do you linger, my brother, outside of the church that Christ loved, and washed with His precious blood!

iii.) Passionately love the church like Christ does, with selfless, sacrificial love, Eph 5:25-27. Long for her glorious fellowship, Psalm 84:1-2.¹⁰ Offer priestly service (1 Peter 2:9)¹¹ with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28-29)¹² in worship. You have in this assembly a greater presence of God than in the tabernacle! Do you act like it? Do you sing like it? Do you show up on time? Can you imagine the high priest on the day of atonement not showing up on time to do the sacrifice? You have better things than he in the church! What are you thinking by being late?

iv.) Fit into the church. You are a body part, and the body is more important than you in particular. The life of the whole body is more important than whatever the toe thinks is best for itself. Maintain unity. Reject strife and division.

v.) Follow church authority. This is part of fitting into the body. Christ rules in the midst of His enemies in this age on earth in the church (Psalm 110:2). Submit to His rule and the leadership He has placed in it. Your pastor is a star in the right hand of Christ (Revelation 1:20; 2:1). Recognize this, and pray for him, thank God for him, follow his leadership, and help him.

vi.) Support the church in bodily presence, in prayer, in mutual edification (Heb 10:24-25), financially, etc.

¹⁰ How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

¹¹ But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

¹² Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire.

vii.) This is the truth about Christ's church. This is what it is, and how you need to view it. Do you?

There are many other practical impossibilities and ecclesiological errors that come from the universal church view. Dr. Thomas Strouse has well explained a number of them:

The ramifications of the biblical teaching that the local church is the body of Christ, that Spirit Baptism was a temporary phenomenon, and that the mystical body of Christ does not exist are broad and serious. . . . There is no . . . divine authority for organizations or efforts outside of the local church to practice the Great Commission. Since the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) requires evangelism, baptism, and instruction in the Word of God, parachurch organizations have no divine authority for their existence . . . [nor do] . . . associations or conventions. . . . Scholars operating in the realm of the "big" universal church offer unbiblical and therefore confusing theological restatements of the Scriptures. Their weak ecclesiology impacts other doctrines such as bibliology, soteriology, and eschatology. . . . To them "true" scholarship occurs in the para-church university or seminary where theologians, trained by other para-church theologians, postulate the "truth" of Scripture. The local church is ill equipped and the pastor is ill prepared to do the real work of the ministry in the realm of scholarship, they maintain. These scholars, whether they have any affiliation with a local church or not, have earned doctorates from accredited para-church academic institutions, and therefore think that they have the last word on theology. Their condescending attitude toward the Lord's assemblies is supposedly justified because they are the "doctors" of theology since they are in "the big church." This disastrous impact undermines the authority of the Bible and usurps the ministry of the Lord's ekklesia. Scripture states that the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15), that the ekklesia is to "commit [theological training] to faithful men" (II Tim. 2:2), that the church member "is to study to shew [himself] approved unto God" (II Tim. 2:15), and that the assembly has been given Christ's gift of "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). The local church as the divinely ordained doctrinal training institution is the Lord's "college." College comes from the Latin *collegium* that means a group of colleagues who have banded together around a particular guild or trade. The particular "guild" in which the local church is engaged is the scholarly pursuit of studying the Scriptures (cf. Acts 17:11). . . . Only the Lord's candlesticks can produce NT churches. Para-church [organizations] cannot baptize converts and cannot commission missionary candidates. . . . The NT teaches, in contradistinction, that the church at Antioch acted as Paul's "mission board" and sent out Barnabas and the Apostle (Acts 13:1 ff.). To be sure, other churches such as the Philippian church helped support Paul's missionary endeavors on his second journey (Phil. 4:15-16). Much of the same criticism could be leveled toward highly structured Baptist fellowships. The unbiblical mindset of the universal church produces the necessity for organized hierarchy outside of the local church. Fellowships, associations and conventions, which develop organizational structure beyond the local church, end up usurping the autonomy of each of the Lord's assemblies. The presidents, regional directors, etc., of these non-authorized structures tend to dictate to the churches resolutions which in turn become "suggested" tenets for orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Some pastors feel intimidated and hesitate to reject these suggestions, ultimately embracing the "traditions" of men (Mk. 7:7) and incorporating these tenets in their particular ekklesia. The NT does teach that there is a place for churches to fellowship around "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). Furthermore, the churches of Galatia were united in biblical doctrine around the Lord Jesus Christ, while retaining their respective autonomy (Gal. 1:2; 3:27-28). Once the Lord's churches recognize [the true doctrine of the church] . . . then they may realize the authority, importance, and dignity the Lord gives exclusively to His candlesticks. The Scriptures teach that the church at Jerusalem had the divine authority in precept and set the precedent to practice the Great Commission. Christ gave the precept of the Great Commission to the apostles who were representatives of the 120 disciples who made up the Lord's ekklesia on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:20). This ekklesia began to evangelize, baptize and instruct Jews and Gentiles as the Book of Acts gives ample precedent. The Scriptures make some amazing and outstanding claims for the Lord's churches. For instance, Paul taught that Christ, Who is Head over all His creation, completely fills His body, the local church (Eph. 1:23). He revealed that the saints in the local churches teach the angelic realm redemptive truths (Eph. 3:10). He averred that local churches, like the Ephesian church, grow up in Christ to become mature bodies through doctrinal teaching (Eph. 4:11-16). He proclaimed that the Lord Jesus Christ both loved and died for individual church[es] . . . (Eph. 5:25) and that He will cleanse the

church members through the washing of the word to present each ekklesia as glorious (Eph. 5:26-27). Elsewhere, the Apostle taught that the local church, the one with a bishop and deacons, was the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:1-15). The Lord spoke through the Apostle John and gave His apocalyptic revelation to seven local churches (Rev. 1-3). When one realizes that the Scriptures teach the local church is the Lord's sole institution for His presence, worship and service, then one recognizes the glory, dignity, and honor that should be attributed to each and every one of Christ's assemblies. ("Ye Are The Body of Christ," Dr. Thomas M. Strouse. Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, Newington, CT. elec. acc. http://www.faithonfire.org/articles/body_of_christ.html)

All The Instances in the NT of the Word *Church*

Matt. 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my **church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matt. 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the **church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the **church** daily such as should be saved.

Acts 5:11 And great fear came upon all the **church**, and upon as many as heard these things.

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the **church** in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the **church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the **church**, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

Acts 9:31 Then had the **churches** rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the **church** which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the **church**, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Acts 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the **church**.

Acts 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the **church** unto God for him.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in the **church** that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every **church**, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the **church** together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Acts 15:3 And being brought on their way by the **church**, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

Acts 15:4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the **church**, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

Acts 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole **church**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the **churches**.

Acts 16:5 And so were the **churches** established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Acts 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the **church**, he went down to Antioch.

Acts 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the **assembly** was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

Acts 19:39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful **assembly**.

Acts 19:41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the **assembly**.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the **church**.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the **church** of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Rom. 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the **church** which is at Cencrea:

Rom. 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the **churches** of the Gentiles.

Rom. 16:5 Likewise *greet* the **church** that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Rom. 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The **churches** of Christ salute you.

Rom. 16:23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole **church**, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

1Cor. 1:2 Unto the **church** of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

1Cor. 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every **church**.

1Cor. 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the **church**.

1Cor. 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all **churches**.

1Cor. 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the **church** of God:

1Cor. 11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the **churches** of God.

1Cor. 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the **church**, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

1Cor. 11:22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the **church** of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

1Cor. 12:28 And God hath set some in the **church**, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

1Cor. 14:4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the **church**.

1Cor. 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the **church** may receive edifying.

1Cor. 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the **church**.

1Cor. 14:19 Yet in the **church** I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.

1Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole **church** be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

1Cor. 14:28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the **church**; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

1Cor. 14:33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all **churches** of the saints.

1Cor. 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the **churches**: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

1Cor. 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the **church**.

1Cor. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the **church** of God.

1Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the **churches** of Galatia, even so do ye.

1Cor. 16:19 The **churches** of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

2Cor. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the **church** of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2Cor. 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the **churches** of Macedonia;

2Cor. 8:18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the **churches**;

2Cor. 8:19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the **churches** to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

2Cor. 8:23 Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the **churches**, and the glory of Christ.

2Cor. 8:24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the **churches**, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

2Cor. 11:8 I robbed other **churches**, taking wages *of them*, to do you service.

2Cor. 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the **churches**.

2Cor. 12:13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other **churches**, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

Gal. 1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the **churches** of Galatia:

Gal. 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the **church** of God, and wasted it:

Gal. 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the **churches** of Judaea which were in Christ:

Eph. 1:22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the **church**,

Eph. 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the **church** the manifold wisdom of God,

Eph. 3:21 Unto him *be* glory in the **church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the **church**: and he is the saviour of the body.

Eph. 5:24 Therefore as the **church** is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the **church**, and gave himself for it;

Eph. 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious **church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Eph. 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the **church**:

Eph. 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the **church**.

Phil. 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the **church**; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Phil. 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no **church** communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

Col. 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the **church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

Col. 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the **church**:

Col. 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the **church** which is in his house.

Col. 4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the **church** of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

1Th. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the **church** of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Th. 2:14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the **churches** of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

2Th. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the **church** of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2Th. 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the **churches** of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

1Tim. 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the **church** of God?)

1Tim. 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the **church** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1Tim. 5:16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the **church** be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Philem. 2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the **church** in thy house:

Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the **church** will I sing praise unto thee.

Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and **church** of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the **church**; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

3John 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the **church**: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

3John 9 I wrote unto the **church**: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

3John 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the **church**.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven **churches** which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

Rev. 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven **churches** which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Rev. 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven **churches**: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Rev. 2:1 Unto the angel of the **church** of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Rev. 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Rev. 2:8 And unto the angel of the **church** in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Rev. 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:12 And to the angel of the **church** in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Rev. 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

Rev. 2:18 And unto the angel of the **church** in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

Rev. 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the **churches** shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Rev. 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the **church** in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Rev. 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 3:7 And to the angel of the **church** in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Rev. 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 3:14 And unto the angel of the **church** of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Rev. 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**.

Rev. 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the **churches**. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.