

Introduction:

The Greek word for church, found 117 times in the New Testament, is “ekklesia”. It means, “a called out assembly, meeting, congregation. A community of members on earth, saints in Heaven, or both.” Compare 2 Corinthians 1:1 and Hebrews 12:23. Thus ecclesiology means the doctrine of the church.

The word “church” is not found in the Old Testament, although Moses leading God’s people through the wilderness, the Tabernacle and all was a type of the church (See Acts 7:38).

The word “ekklesia” is translated “assembly” on 3 occasions in the New Testament: Acts 19:32, 39, 41. This stresses to us the need of *assembling* with the church and not just joining the church.

Once the word “churches” is translated from a Greek work “hierosules” which means a “temple spoiler”. In it’s text in 2 Corinthians 11:8 you can see why a different word is used.

The word “church” is found in the New Testament 80 times. The word “churches” is found 37 times for a total of 117 times. Thus there are many churches, not just one.

The church is a group of saved, born-again Christians, called out of the world for the purpose of assembling together.

As we study the word “church” in the context of Scriptures, we come to the conclusion that it has 2 working definitions:

1. The visible local church (most references)

2. The body of Christ (all believers worldwide who are members of Christ’s body)

The great majority of scriptures deal with the local New Testament church. Here are a few in which the word “church” or “churches” are found. Notice how clearly they denote a local (not universal) assembly of believers:

“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 11:26)

“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 13:1)

“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 14:27)

“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:” (1 Corinthians 1:2)

“The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” (1 Corinthians 16:19)

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;” (2 Corinthians 8:1)

“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:” (1 Thessalonians 2:14)

“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.” (Revelation 2:7)

Each local church is a “whole church,” not a part of some “universal church” or “mother church.”

“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 15:22)

“Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.” (Romans 16:23)

“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?” (1 Corinthians 14:23)

Every believer should be added to the local church and faithfully attend and support that church. They should discover their spiritual gift(s) (Romans 12:6-8) then develop those gifts and become qualified to use them. They should attach themselves to some ministry(ies) where their gift can be used and go to work using their gifts to edify the body of Christ in some capacity. They should uphold the standards of their church while working there. The Pastor should oversee the standards and the behavior of all church workers (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 13:7,17,24).

All members should be involved in the great commission of preaching the gospel to every creature, getting converts baptized, and discipling those converts. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; Acts 8:4)

Let us look at the Biblical Basis for the church: first a general overview, then the specifics.

I. The Church Is Founded Upon The Rock, That Is On The Doctrine Of The Lordship Of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Rock, not Peter. See Matthew 16:13-19. The word “Peter” in verse 18 is the Greek word “Petros” which means “a small stone.” Four words later is the word “rock” (again verse 18) which is the Greek word “Petra,” which means “a massive rock.” Conclusion: Peter and the Rock are two completely different items. The rock that Jesus is referring to is Peter’s statement in verse 16, which deals with the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ. All scriptures compared tell us that Christ is the Rock, not Peter:

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.” (Luke 6:47-48)

“Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 9:32,33)

“And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4)

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” (1 Peter 2:7-8)

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 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 2:19-22)

On the contrary, Peter (petros - a small stone) was renamed by Jesus himself. His new name was Cephas - John 1:42, which means a stone. Peter is often referred to as Cephas by the early church:

“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:12)

“Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;” (1 Corinthians 3:22)

“Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5)

“And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:” (1 Corinthians 15:5)

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” (Galatians 2:9)

Conclusion: Peter is not “The Rock,” just part of the foundation of the Christian faith. He is to be remembered as “a small stone” or a “stone.” The church was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ “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” (Acts 20:28). How can anyone say then that Peter is the owner, head, or rock of the church?