

# **What do you Mean... “Church”?**

*(An excerpt from the book “Nazarene Theology”)*

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**Published by  
Institute for Nazarene Jewish Studies  
PO Box 471  
Hurst, TX 76053  
<http://www.nazarene.co.nr>**

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## What do you Mean... “Church”?

There has been a great deal of confusion over the years over what the "church" is. Some have taught that the Church is a new entity which replaces Israel. Others have taught that the Church is a new body which is totally independent of Israel. Still others have taught that the Church and Israel are two different but overlapping entities. With all of the misconceptions about the identity of the "Church" the time has come to set the story straight and reveal what the "Church" really is.

The English word "Church" comes originally from the Old English word KIRKE. The Old English word KIRKE was the word the Anglo-Saxons used to refer to their pagan places of worship. When they became Christianized the Anglo-Saxons continued to call their places of worship KIRKES and as the language evolved "Churches". You may have heard that the word "Church" originally referred to the people and later came to refer to the building. This is not true. The word "Church" originally referred to the building and later came to refer to the people. Moreover the word "church" is of pagan origin

Now if you look up the English word "Church" in Webster's dictionary you will find the following meanings:

1. a building set apart or consecrated for public worship, esp. one for Christian worship.
2. All Christians as a whole.
3. A denomination of Christians.

In short a "church" is either a building or a group of Christians.

Now wherever we see the English word "church" in an English Bible we would expect the underlying Greek word would be a Greek word that also means "a group of Christians". Since the English uses such a technical theological term one would expect that the Greek has also used a technical theological term. But the reality is that the Greek

word that appears wherever the English has "church" is not a technical theological term and DOES NOT mean "a group of Christians" at all. That's right, a technical theological term of pagan origin meaning "a group of Christians" has been inserted in your English Bible despite the fact that the corresponding Greek word is not a technical theological term and does not mean the same thing as the word "Church".

The Greek word that appears where our English Bible's have "church" is EKKLESIA. EKKLESIA is just the Greek word for "assembly". Although it comes from a root meaning "to call out" there is no special theological significance to this word. In fact this is the same Greek word which was used for "assembly" by the classical Pagan Greek writers. Inscriptions in ancient Greek auditoriums where pagan ritual dramas were performed by the Bacchus cult have the audience section inscribed with the sign "EKKLESIA". This same Greek word EKKLESIA is used throughout the Greek Septuagint translation of the Tanak as the word for "assembly". There are also many places where the Greek word EKKLESIA appears in the NT but which the KJV and other translators did NOT translate the word as "church". This same Greek word is even used in Acts 19:32-41 to describe an unruly mob, yet here the translators suddenly translate the word as "assembly" rather than "church".

There is therefore no such thing as the "church" because the Greek word translated "church" does not mean "church" at all but "assembly".

Now there are some who claim that the "Church" was a new entity born in Acts 2 at Pentecost of 32 C.E. . However if we examine the events of Acts 2 we find that at that event persons were "added to" the "church" (Acts 2:47) which means that the "church" had to have already existed at that time. If we turn to Acts 7:38 we see that it speaks of Moses as "he that was in the church in the wilderness". Certainly this "church" could not have been a new "New Testament" entity.

Now while the term "church" is a mistranslation for a word simply meaning "assembly", there is an entity which is commonly referred to

as "The Assembly" in the New Testament. Let us examine the Scriptures and determine what the true identity of this "Assembly" is.

To begin with we must understand that this Assembly is also known as the "Body of Messiah" as we read:

"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. 1:18 - KJV)

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

(Eph. 1:22-23 - KJV)

Now one may ask what "Assembly" is the allegorical Messiah? To find the answer to that question lets look at Matthew 2:14-15:

"When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord

by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. "

(Matthew 2:14-15 - KJV)

Now here Matthew is citing a prophecy in Hosea 11:1 and applying it to Messiah. Now let us go back and look at this prophecy in Hosea 11:1 in context:

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him,  
and called my son out of Egypt."

(Hosea 11:1 - KJV)

Here Hosea is referring to Israel as the son who is called out of Egypt. This points us back to a passage in the Torah:

"And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn."  
(Ex. 4:22-23 - KJV)

From these two passages we learn that Israel is the firstborn son of Elohim who is called out of Egypt. However in Matthew it is Yeshua the Messiah who is called up out of Egypt and in Col. 1:18 Messiah is the "firstborn". Moreover Hebrews speaks of the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23 - KJV).

Thus Israel is allegorically equivalent to the Messiah. There are some very important reasons for this allegorical relationship:

- \* Both are the "firstborn Son of Elohim".
- \* Both made a major impact on the world.
- \* Both were born through a biological miracle on their mother's womb.
- \* Both were taken into Egypt to save their lives.
- \* Both were called up out of Egypt.
- \* Both were despised and rejected by men.
- \* Rome attempted to destroy them both.
- \* Both are resurrected.

Thus Israel is the allegorical "Body of Messiah". Moreover in the Tanak, Israel is commonly called "The Assembly of Israel" and wherever the phrase "The Assembly of Israel" appears in the Tanak the Greek LXX has "EKKLESIA of Israel".

The so-called "church" which is the "Body of Messiah" is in reality "the Assembly of Israel". Yeshua did not come to create a new religion, but to be Messiah of the old one. Wherever your English New

Testament refers to a "church" (i.e. a group of Christians) the Greek has "EKKLESIA a term which commonly refers to the "Assembly of Israel". The "Church" as most Christians have understood it never existed. All of the passage people have thought were talking about the "Church" were actually talking about the Assembly of Israel, not Christianity, but the Nazarene sect of Judaism.

### What do you mean... “Kingdom”?

What is meant by the term "Kingdom"?

To understand the Kingdom we must first understand the terms "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of Elohim". These terms are used interchangeably:

<p>"Happy are the poor of spirit, for theirs is the <b>Kingdom of Heaven</b>. (Mt. 5:3 HRV)</p>	<p>And he lifted up his eyes to his talmidim and said, Happy are you who are poor because yours is the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b>. (Lk. 6:20 HRV)</p>
<p>Go, and cry, saying 'Turn you, turn you, for the <b>Kingdom of Heaven</b> is offered,' (Mt. 10:7 HRV)</p>	<p>And he sent them to proclaim the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b> and to heal &lt;the sick&gt;. (Lk. 9:2 HRV)</p>
<p>Still another parable put he forth to them, saying, "The <b>Kingdom of Heaven</b> is comparable to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed it in his field, (Mt. 13:31 HRV)</p>	<p>And he said, What is like the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b> and with what parable can we compare it? (Mk. 4:30 HRV)</p>
<p>And he answered and said to them, "Because it is given to you to understand the secrets of the <b>Kingdom of Heaven</b>, but to these it is not given. (Mt. 13:11 HRV)</p>	<p>And Yeshua said to them, To you is given to know the mystery of the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b>. But to [those] outside, everything is in parables. (Mk. 4:11 HRV)</p>
<p>And Yeshua said, "Allow the children, and hinder them not from coming to me, for of such is</p>	<p>And Yeshua saw and was offended and said to them, Permit the children [to] come to me and</p>

<p>the <b>Kingdom of Heaven</b>." (Mt. 19:14 HRV)</p>	<p>do not hinder them, for because of those who are as these are, the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b> exists. Truly I say to you that anyone who does not receive the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b> like a child will not enter it. (Mk. 10:14-15 HRV)</p>
<p>And Yeshua said to him, "If you will be whole-hearted, go sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and you will have great store in heaven, and come follow me." But when the young man heard the saying, he went away troubled, for he had great possessions. Then said Yeshua to his talmidim, "Truly I tell you, that the rich will with difficulty enter into the <b>Kingdom of Heaven</b>. And again I tell you; It is easier to pass a large rope through the eye of the needle, than to bring the rich into the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mt. 19:21-24 HRV)</p>	<p>And when Yeshua heard these things he said to him, One is lacking to you. Go, sell everything that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and follow me. But when he heard these things he was sad, for he was very rich. And when Yeshua saw that he was sad, he said, How difficult [it will be] for those who have possessions to enter the <b>Kingdom of Eloah</b>. Because it is easier for a large rope that he enter through the eye of a needle than a rich man the kingdom of Eloah. (Lk. 18:22-25 HRV)</p>

Both terms refer to the Kingdom of Elohim. This is because in Hebrew and Aramaic it is common to substitute the word for "Heaven" for the word Elohim so as not to make to common a use of the word Elohim. Another example of this may be found in 1Enoch 6:1-2 [4QEnoch(b)] = Gen. 6:1-2 where "sons' of God" (Gen. 6:2) has been replaced with "sons' of heaven" (1En. 6:1-2):

<p>And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the <b>sons of Elohim</b> saw the daughters of men</p>	<p>And it came to pass when the sons of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the <b>sons of</b></p>
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<p>that they were fair; and they took them wives, whomsoever they chose. (Gen. 6:1-2)</p>	<p><i>heaven</i>, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the sons of men and beget us children.' (1Enoch 6:1-2 [4QEnoch(b)])</p>
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While the term "Kingdom of Elohim" does not appear in the Tanak (O.T.) the term "Kingdom of YHWH" appears twice (1Chron. 28:5; 2Chron. 13:8) and there certainly can be no difference between these two Kingdoms. It is important to note that in both of the usages of the term "Kingdom of YHWH" the Kingdom referred to is clearly the literal Kingdom of Israel:

Howbeit YHWH, the Elohim of Yisra'el, chose me out of all the house of my father to be king over Yisra'el for ever; for He has chosen Y'hudah to be prince, and in the House of Y'hudah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father He took pleasure in me to make me king over all Yisra'el; and of all my sons--for YHWH has given me many sons--He has chosen Shlomo my son to sit upon the throne of the **Kingdom of YHWH** over Yisra'el.  
(1Chron. 28:4-5 HRV)

And there were gathered unto him vain men, base fellows that strengthened themselves against Rechav'am the son of Shlomo, when Rechav'am was young and faint-hearted, and could not withstand them. And now you think to withstand the **Kingdom of YHWH** in the hand of the sons of David; and you are a great multitude, and there are with you the golden calves which Yarov'am made you for gods.  
(2Chron. 13:7-8 HRV)

Another passage which makes the identity of the Kingdom of Elohim/Heaven evident is Mt. 5:3 = Lk. 6:20. In this passage the phrase "poor in spirit" is quoted in an abridged form from "poor and contrite in spirit" (Is. 66:2) where the Kingdom which these will inherit is the Kingdom of Israel restored (Is. 66:2, 7-9). Furthermore Mt. 5:3 is part of a Hebrew poem known today as the Beatitudes, this

poem exhibits a quality of Hebrew poetry called "synonymous parallelism" in which successive lines repeat the same meaning in different words. In Mt. 5:5 (a passage parallel to Mt. 5:3) we read that the "meek shall inherit the earth" quoting Ps. 37:11. The Hebrew word for earth here is "eretz" which is better translated here as "land" which is how most translations render it in Ps. 37:11. The terms "meek" (from Ps. 37:11) and "poor in spirit" (from Is. 66:2) are almost identical, very closely related Hebrew words. The term Kingdom of Heaven (in Mt. 5:3) is therefore parallel to "land" (in Mt. 5:5 = Ps. 37:11). This means that the Kingdom of Heaven is the Land of Israel being referred to in Ps. 37:11.

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