

An Explanation (Part Two)

by

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As a continuation of the last article of this series, I said that I would show you how the word “church,” as it is now used, came to be substituted for the Greek term that was used by Jesus—“ekklesia.” And I also said that it was substituted by the power of those in “ecclesiastical” roles. This I will attempt to let you see, if you can.

I have been giving this much thought lately, and the more I study this subject, the more convinced I become. In this article I shall say some things that I believe should be said. I don’t want to appear sensational, but much of what I say will be challenging to our current thoughts and expressions. Those readers that are under the curse of unconcern will not spend any time or make any real effort to understand the significance of what is written herein. Many who are stuck fast in traditionalism, and in the spirit of a partisan, will bristle with resentment at what is to be said. But those of you who are eager for a “laying bare” of the facts, and can maintain an open mind, being motivated by a sincere desire to know the will of God, will critically examine what is said in the light of the language of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. It is to these last mentioned that we look for honest criticism and we invite all such people to express themselves to us freely so that we can examine what they say and eliminate any flaws that might show up in our thinking.

It is our desire that those of you who cannot share our views, write us the reasons why you can’t. I promise to carefully look over all that you offer. Let us now proceed with our examination of the nature of the word “ekklesia” and the word “church.” None of this material I bring out is new or profound, for it has been the topic of many scholars in many different ages. (Note: Some spell ekklesia with two “C’s”—ecclesia. We are talking about the same word.)

As you read this article, I want you to be fully aware that none of it is bound upon you as in authoritarian or authoritative decrees; but we do have great authority for what we bring out. That authority is the speaking of the truth according to the revelation of Jesus and His Apostles as recorded in the Scriptures. Our desire is to bring out facts, with the proper authority of evidences to back them up—so that you can come to an intelligent conclusion. This pertains to anything written in these articles. We do not desire not seek to be pompous nor pious, for as God is not a respecter of man, neither are we.

I said in the last article that the word “church” is a poor rendering of the Greek term “ekklesian.” I substantiated this with many facts from Scriptures and from the way the Greek’s used the term in the first century. In fact, the term was used, as was presented, from 350 BC and is still used with the same meaning today. Ask any Greek speaking man what it means and then you will see what I am saying.

Let me add some meat to your diet concerning the word “church” versus “ekklesian.” In the Old Testament two separate Hebrew words were employed to signify the gathering of the Jews. The first word I call to your attention is the term “edhah,” which in a secular sense was used to refer to the harvest which was a gathering of the vintage and to the recruiting of people for such things as wars and games. Its root

meaning is of “gathering.” In the Septuagint (LXX), which was a Greek translation of the Old Hebrew Scriptures made some 280 years before Jesus came into the world, “edhah” is translated by the term “sunagoge”—a bringing together. This word is commonly rendered “gathering place or the gathering building”—a synagogue. (Note: It is sometimes called the Jewish Church.)

The second word I call to your attention, is the Hebrew word “tahal” (Some spell this “qahal” or “kahal”), which is from the root form meaning “to call or summon.” The term itself means “called out or summoned for a specific purpose.” The Greek language had a term very much like this meaning. They applied it to an “assembly of citizens” of their City-State. This “assembly” was not a mere collection of citizens in the “agora,” or market place, neither was it a casual gathering of a group for discussion. It only referred to the legal assembly of qualified and accredited citizens possessing the credentials and the right to gather; called out or summoned to meet for a discussion or decision on legal matters. The Greek term for this was the word “ekklesian.” The very same word Jesus used in Matthew 16:18.

Where the Hebrew term “tahal” occurs in the Jewish Scriptures, the Greek Septuagint uses the word “ekklesian” as the equivalent term, and it is so translated over ninety times. This is the term that Jesus used three times when talking of the people he would gather out of the Nations. This is the term Jesus used to say what he would build, and which the gates of hades would never prevail against.

At this point I am going to bring up some thoughts that will seem revolutionary. In fact, they are revolutionary; and many leaders in all Churches, Catholic and Protestant alike, so call them. But, note this, the scholars these same leaders call upon to translate the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures say the same things I say. Now, if any man would have an open heart/mind, and would let the Holy Spirit speak to them in the words he moved the writers of Scripture to write, that man will understand what I am saying.

1. When Jerome, the one who translated the Greek Septuagint into the Latin language, ran across the Greek word “ekklesian,” why did he use the term meaning “assembly” instead of “church,” which in the Latin is a word that translates from two distinct Greek terms, “kurios” and “oikos”—kuriakon?
2. If Jerome didn’t translate “ekklesian” into the Latin word meaning “church,” who did? And for what reason?
3. Why would the term “ekklesian,” which is Greek, and appears in the Septuagint, if it means “church,” not be translated “church” in the Old Testament Scriptures?
4. Why, when we look at the early translations of the Greek Scriptures (the Coptic, about 150 AD; the Syriac, about 180 AD; and the Old Latin of Africa, about 140 AD) never translate the Greek word “ekklesian” into meaning what we get from “kurios” and “oikos”—the late-appearing Greek term “kuriakon,” which means “a house of a Lord?”
5. When those in “ecclesiastical office” state that the oldest manuscripts of Scriptures are more correct than the newer (those in #4 versus the versions of 850 AD), why do they continue to ignore them and modernize the latest ones?

These questions I put forth for you to think upon are revolutionary (and please think long and hard on them). They are very revolting to those in power in any and all of what we today call “churches.” If you doubt what I say, try asking your church leaders questions of the type I bring up to you. You will find yourself being politely chastised for even thinking what I say. A great number will ignore you or give you a standard answer: “Church means the house of the Lord,” and then they will impress upon you their educational and votive office. My friends, that is prideful man talking and is of the wisdom of the world, not of Christ.

Let me now show you how certain ones with “*ecclesiastical power*” or authority have substituted one word for another, and in so doing, say that that is what Christ started. Because of the office they hold, their words are accepted as truth and are perpetuated just as if they were the inspired Scriptures from God. It is ingenious, crafty, and is a sly way of bringing error into Christianity. I now quote from a religious course I once took in High School. See if you can see the subtle way one word is substituted for another.

Section Three, Chapter One: “The Founding of the Church.” (The Title.)

Point One: The word “church” is derived from the Greek word “kuriakon” sc., doma, “the Lord’s house.” The Greek word “ecclesia,” from which the French “eglise” and the Italian “chiesa” are derived, and also the corresponding Hebrew word “tahal,” means “assembly.” Christ borrowed the word from the Old Testament, where it meant the “assembly” of the Nation of Israel.

Point Two: Christ frequently speaks of his kingdom. He also calls it the Kingdom of Heaven; i.e., the Kingdom which came down from heaven, and the Kingdom of God.

Point Three: Christ speaks of his flock: “Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Point Four: Christ calls his Kingdom a Church. Christ seldom used the word “ecclesia,” the Church, which was to become the universal designation of his Kingdom on earth. All the more emphatic is his use of the word on the occasion of Peter’s profession of faith in his divinity: “I say to thee, thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (Matthew 16:18).

Notice how in Point Four that the word “church” is attached as the meaning of “ecclesia,” even after Point One gave the correct definitions of both words. It is ingenious how man can make Christ say what he didn’t say, with their sly way of changing the meanings of words. By doing this, which is against all scholarship in translating from one language to another, “Church”—“the Lord’s house,” is put into Christ’s mouth! Because of this, “church” became known as an institution with a local “ruler.” I quote again from further in that paper: “As a ‘house’ has only one ‘head’ in charge, thusly it figures and is reasonable that ‘the Lord’s house’ has only one ‘head’ or ‘ruler’.” This reasoning is very faulty, for Christ never started a “Lord’s house” in which we were to worship unless you use it the way the Apostle Paul did: Your body is the temple of God. Your body is the “house of the Lord.” Your body is the only thing that the word “kuriakon” can be related to. Your body is the “church.”

I do agree that “church” means “a lord’s house,” but I do not agree that that is what Christ meant when he used the Greek term “ekklesian.” Let me further explain. The word “church” is not an adequate translation of “ekklesian” at all. There is nothing in it that signifies a calling out or a calling together. It has no connection with either an assemblage or a congregation. It came to appear in our English language as an abbreviation of a completely different term, “kuriakon,” the late-Greek word derived from “kurios” and “oikos.” It thusly means, literally, “the house of a Lord.” **Jesus never, I repeat, never used this term or meaning.**

Look back in Article One. Re-read the facts as to what the term “ekklesian” really means. A recognition of the inappropriateness of the word “church” will prompt you to substitute the true meaning of “ekklesian” by the words assembly, congregation, or community, and you would be very correct in doing so.

Our modern scholars, of whom many are not even translators, use the word “church” because it has acquired a certain “*ecclesiastical*” meaning. It is a professional term sanctioned by a clergy, both Catholic and Protestant. It did not have such a connotation in the days before the rise of a sacerdotal clergy in the “church,” and I use that term loosely. Because of this late acquisition, scholars never use it in the Old Testament Scriptures. There they faithfully render the equivalent Hebrew terms by “assembly” or congregation.

Such reasoning as this will be lost upon many of our contemporary religionists: They are not so much concerned about the rightness of all things as in defending what they have, whether it is right or wrong! Instead of “searching the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be so” (See Acts 17:11), they invest their time in condemning those who dare to question their traditions and opinions.

It is from a recognition of this mental bias that we will use the term “church” which has been sanctified by repeated usage despite its inappropriateness. We must “speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of the flesh” (See Romans 6:19). We have no desire to wound the conscience of the weak in faith nor drive from us those who cannot concur in our findings. But in this discussion of “the church,” we have our own reservations regarding the term “ekklesian,” even though we defer out of regard for our readers, to their opinions on this. We pray that what we say may open the eyes of some so that they can see what we mean.

Let us now define the words “kurios” and oikos” for you, and also the word “church” from current dictionaries.

1. Oikos: A house, a dwelling place; a Greek noun. (Never used in Christian Scriptures to point to a place where God dwells on earth. It is the earthly abode of men.) With prepositions, such as, en—at home; Kata—from house, in every house; and derivatives: Oikeo; to “occupy a house,” i.e., reside in (figuratively inhabit, remain; in-here); by implication to cohabit: dwell. See also Oikeios, Oikia, Oikiakos, etc.

2. Kurios: properly an adjective, signifying having power (kuros) or authority, is used as a noun, variously translated in the New Testament as “Lord, Master, Owner, Sir:” A title of wide significance.

a) of an Owner: Luke 19:33, compare Matthew 20:8; Acts 16:16 and Galatians 4:1.

b) of a Master, i.e., one to whom service is due on any grounds; Matthew 6:24, 24:50 and Ephesians 6:5.

c) of idols (ironically), 1 Corinthians 8:5, compare with Isaiah 26:13.

d) of an Emperor or King: Acts 25:26 and Revelation 17:14.

e) as a title of respect: Matthew 21:30; a husband, 1 Peter 3:6; a master, Matthew 13:27, Luke 13:8; a ruler, Matthew 27:63; an angel, Acts 10:4 and Revelations 7:14.

f) as a title of courtesy addressed to a stranger: John 12:21, 20:15 and Acts 16:30. This was a common form of address to Jesus 1) by the people at large: Matthew 8:2 and John 4:11; 2) by his disciples: Matthew 8:25, Luke 5:8 and John 6:68.

g) Kurios is the Septuagint and Greek New Testament representative of the Hebrew Jehovah. See Matthew 4:7, James 5:11, e.g., 1) of Adon, Lord: Matthew 22:44; 2) Adonay, Lord: Matthew 1:22; and 3), Elohim, God: 1 Peter 1:25.

As you can see, by the combining of these two distinct Greek words, taking only certain meanings from “kurios,” you can arrive at “the house of ‘the Lord’—God,” or ‘a Lord’.” This was done around the year 200–250 AD. Before this time, the rendering of “ekklesian” meant only “a called out people for a purpose”—an assembly, congregation or community of particular people. “Kuriakon” is never found in the Scriptures, much less spoken of by Jesus as saying that he would build a “kuriakon” of believers.

Now to look at what our current dictionaries have to say.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.

- a) All Christians regarded as a spiritual body.
- b. A building for public worship.
- C A congregation (in attendance).
- d. A religious service.
- e. Any Christian denomination (sect).
- f. Ecclesiastical power as distinguished from the Laity.
- g. Late-Greek (doma) Kuriakon, the Lord’s (house).

Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary.

1. Church: a noun. From middle English, *chirche*; from old English, *cirice*: akin to old High-German *kirihha*—church; both from a prehistoric Western Germanic word derived from the Late-Greek *kuriakon*, from Greek neuter of *kuriakos*—of the Lord (man or God), from *kurios*—Lord (man or God), master, owner; from *kuros*—power.

- a) A building for public and especially Christian worship.
 - b) The clergy or officialdom of a religious body.
 - c) A body or organization of religious believers as 1) the whole body of Christians; 2) Denominations (sects); 3) congregations.
 - d) A public divine worship: (phraseology is: goes to = every Sunday).
 - e) The clerical profession.
2. Church as an adjective: of or relating to a church. The government: (use means the office).
3. Church as a verb transitive: bring to (church-building) to receive one of its rites.

