

Lifting Up The

STANDARD



“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).

What Makes A Church A Church?

The word “church” occurs 112 times in the Word of God. The Greek word from which the word “church” is translated is “ecclesia.” In Acts chapter nineteen the word “ecclesia” occurs three times where it is translated “assembly.”

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 19:23,

“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.”

Bible Preaching Caused A Problem

Acts nineteen, presents a clear picture of an assembly. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching in Ephesus for nearly three years. Opposition arose, as it always will if we preach like men of God preached as recorded in the Word of God. At Ephesus, the silversmiths who crafted false idols stirred up a riot. In verse twenty-nine we read, “*the whole city was filled with confusion.*”

Their Assembly Included Three Things

A PLACE ... “The Theatre.”

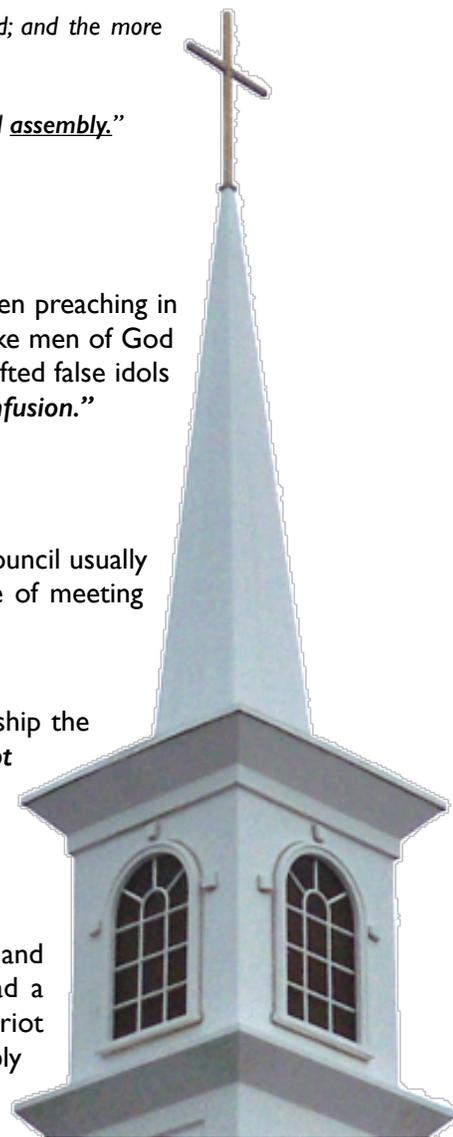
As a result of the confusion, the people poured into the *place* where the town council usually met. “*they rushed with one accord into the theatre*” (v.29 & 31). Today, this type of meeting would take place in a town hall.

A PERSON ... “The Town Clerk.”

The assembly required a qualified *person* to lead the meeting. Without leadership the people were confused, “*the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together*” (v. 32). The “*town clerk*” (v. 35), representing the leadership, brought order to the meeting. He determined that the problem needed to be solved in a “*lawful assembly*” (*ecclesia*).

A PURPOSE ... Their Purpose Was “Unlawful.”

Their assembly was unlawful because it had been assembled without leadership and without a clear purpose. The town clerk concluded that if the silversmiths had a problem they should meet specifically to solve it. He then rebuked them for the riot and dismissed the assembly. Without these three basic requirements the assembly was an “*unlawful assembly.*” These requirements are necessary for a local church to be a Scripturally *lawful* assembly



Three Things Are Necessary For A Church

This definition of an *assembly* holds true in every passage the word is used, from Israel in the wilderness to God's "ecclesia" or "church." **We must have a place.** We commonly meet in buildings we call churches; however, we could meet in a cave or a home and it could still be a lawful assembly according to the Scriptures. **We must have a person.** God calls him a pastor. **We must have a purpose** and that too is given plainly in the Word of God.

Jesus Refers To The "Ecclesia"

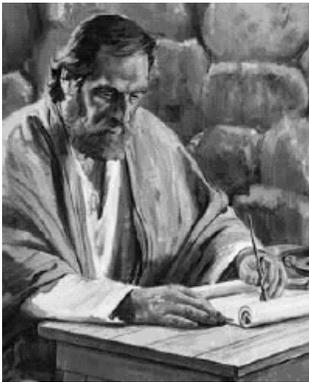
In Matthew chapter sixteen Jesus was speaking to His disciples about the way things were to be done in the future. The Greek word used in this verse is "ecclesia." An ecclesia was, and is (1) an assembly, (2) organized in a specific place, (3) with a God-given qualified leader.

There was nobody present when Matthew sixteen was written to insert some *C. I. Figured-it-out* footnotes, saying the word "ecclesia" means something other than an assembly. There was nobody in the group defending his Bible College professor who said, "This is what the Bible says but this is what it means."

An ecclesia is an assembly. We have no more right to change the meaning of this Greek word than we have the right to change the meaning of the word *Heaven, Hell, or virgin.* Jesus was not referring to a universal, invisible group of Christians.

The Bible gives specific instructions as to the organization of God's assemblies. The last mention of the church came from Christ. He said: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." (assemblies).

Paul And The "Ecclesia"



Paul was used of the Lord to establish many churches.

Acts 14:23,

"And when they had ordained them elders in every ecclesia (assembly) and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

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 ecclesia (assembly) of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Writing to the assembly at Ephesus, Paul charged the leaders of that assembly to feed their specific people. He told them that Jesus had purchased the Ephesian assembly with His own blood. Paul was **not** instructing the pastors to feed a so-called invisible, universal church. How can any pastor feed a universal assembly? What would he feed this so-called universal church? Does he feed

the Pentecostal Christians information about speaking in tongues, does he feed the Brethren Christians information about our Baptist position concerning our assemblies, or do the Pentecostal and Brethren pastors feed the Baptists with their doctrinal positions?



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The Danger of Crocodile Tears
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The Jew - The Gentile - The Church

In First Corinthians 10:32 Paul wrote,

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the ecclesia (assembly) of God."

If we were in that local assembly at Corinth two-thousand years ago when this letter from Paul was read, we would understand it to be referring to us. We would not assume that Paul was talking about Christians in Japan, Russia, China, India or any other place other than our assembly at Corinth. Paul was saying the Christians at Ephesus needed to be careful not to offend those outside of that assembly.

A Universal Husband?

Ephesians 5:23,

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the assembly: and he is the saviour of the body."

Scotfield says this is the "true church," meaning his so-called "universal" church. But notice that "husband" and "wife" are singular and so is "church." Christ is not claiming to be the head of an assembly of assemblies, anymore than the husband is the head of an assembly of wives.

Ephesians 5:24,

"Therefore as the assembly is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

Ephesians 5:25,

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly, and gave himself for it."

If we were in that assembly when this letter was read to us, we would simply understand Christ loved and died for our assembly, because there were no footnotes from Scotfield in the letter to lead us astray. *Ecclesia* means "assembly," and we should not violate Scripture by giving it a broader meaning than God intended. Paul was not referring to a universal husband, a universal wife, or a universal church.

It is an interesting fact that great preachers of the past, who died before the Scotfield Reference Bible was written did not focus on a universal church. **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**, who some say wrote more than all other writers put together did not promote a universal church in his writings. **D. L. Moody, Sam Jones, Billy Sunday, Wilbur Chapman, George Muller, David Livingston, John Wesley** and most other great writers who died before the Scotfield Bible was published did not focus on a universal church.

Problems Caused By Wrong Doctrine

1. The Ecumenical "movement," and para-church ministries came into existence because of "universal" church thinking.
2. Our Fundamental "movement" pushed God's local assemblies into the background and opened the doors for more para-church ministries where everyone could do that which was right in their own eyes.
3. Bible standards concerning *separation, dress, and music* were soon lowered and even ridiculed by many leaders in the para-church organizations.

One of the reasons for the popularity of "Universal" church thinking and para-church ministries is their independence from God-given authority.



"The only reason some of us are not exiled or thrown into prison is simply because we do not preach as fervently and as sternly as did Paul, John, Peter and others." ~Oliver

B. Greene

"It is a poor sermon that gives no offence; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher"

George Whitefield

By-passing Authority



The verses below were obviously written in the context of a local assembly.

Hebrews 13:17,

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Hebrews 13:7,

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

Para-church promoters do not need to be concerned about facing church discipline because those who would be involved in a disciplinary action, are invisible. Since their “ministries” are outside of the local church, they can organize it in any way that is “*right in their own eyes*” because the Bible has no instructions concerning any ministry outside of the local church. They can even do that which is right in their own eyes concerning their money, because tithing is a local church thing.

The House Church Movement

The “house church movement” is becoming very popular in recent days. According to Barna research, there are eleven million people involved in the “house church movement” in the United States, with seventy million having experimented with it. A house is a place where a family lives. A church according to the Scriptures is an assembly meeting for a specific purpose with a qualified leader. A movement is something entirely foreign to the Word of God as far as presenting the cause of Christ is concerned. It is not unscriptural for a church that is organized according to the Word of God to meet in a house. The following Scriptures refers to churches meeting in houses:

Romans 16:5, “...greet the church that is in their house.”

First Corinthians 16:19, “...the church that is in their house.”

Colossians 4:15, “...the church that is in their house.”

Philemon 1:2, “...the church in thy house.”

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

A Scripturally organized church can meet in a house, a forest, or its own building. The important issue is whether or not the church meets the Scriptural demands. **A group of Christians that are meeting because they want to avoid the authority of a pastor-led assembly is not a Scriptural church.**

An Open Letter From An Invisible Pastor

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