



The House Church

A Return to the Apostolic Model for House Churches

"And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." Acts 5:42

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Introduction

A common lament among many church leaders is how hard it is to find people willing to commit their lives to God. Church attendance has been steadily declining over the years as is men entering seminary training. I was recently speaking with a pastor who provides regional support to local churches who told me that well over half (closer to three-quarters) of the people attending church are not living a regenerate life in Christ. The same habits and lifestyle they had prior to joining their local church continues to be the way they live afterward. I was unfortunately not shocked to hear that, for we all come in contact with these people every day, and if they don't tell you they're Christian, you'd never think it.

While many in ministry are quick to acknowledge that there are serious problems facing the contemporary church today, all but a very few seem to acknowledge that this is more of a problem for how "the other guy" operates and not how they do. This brings to mind the tongue-in-cheek definition for insanity, "continuing to do the same thing the same way yet expecting a different outcome."

It begs the question, "Why would Jesus establish a model for the church that would end up in disarray?" Answer is He wouldn't, or more accurately, He didn't. So I guess its time to go back to the drawing board to see what that model is, and to fix things that may be broken. The only drawing board for this is Scripture.

Church Defined

Church in the New Covenant has two fundamental biblical expressions: the first is **The Body of Christ**; and the second is the Greek work ἐκκλησία *ekklesia* (ek-klay-see'-ah) which literally means a **called out assembly** and is translated church. Scriptures use *ekklesia* and the body to represent the people of God. New Covenant terms used to describe the *ekklesia* include disciples, brothers, sisters, Christians, and saints. In this study, we shall use the term *ekklesia* often when referring to those God is calling for reasons that will hopefully become very clear once we've completed the study.

The church is a spiritual organism that is universal in nature and not visible as the body of Messiah (Christ and Messiah are the exact same word with Christ being of the Greek and Messiah from Hebrew translations). All regenerate believers are placed into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit regardless of ethnicity, location, denomination, local affiliations, age, maturity or any other earthly factors. In this regard the church is universal and invisible for the body of Christ is not identifiable with any specific assembly anywhere in the world for it includes every regenerate believer everywhere in the world. The body of Christ consists of those living and dead from both Old and the New Covenants who are saved by grace through faith in Messiah Jesus. Unfortunately, there are those who believe that only those of the New Covenant are saved and that somehow God could not apply saving grace through faith to those of the Old Covenant who through faith believed God as they looked forward to the coming Messiah. Scriptures teach that all people of all time are saved by grace through faith. There never was and never will be any other way or path to Salvation other than through Jesus. Some teach that the body of Christ is a visible "institutional organization" rather than the "transformational organism" established by God.

There is only one word in Scripture that is translated church and that Greek word is *ekklesia* which appears in Scripture 118 times and is translated church except for three verses where it is translated *assembly*. There are also a few verses where some translators insert the word church where *ekklesia* is not present in any of those verses. This was done in an effort to help make the passages read more clearly, though unnecessary to do so in my humble opinion for the subject being the church is clearly implied. Nonetheless, the context where that was done indeed refers to the *ekklesia* (1Cor 5:12; Col. 1:25; 1Tim 3:7), so no harm, no foul. *Ekklesia* in its common usage by the Greeks was understood to mean a lawful assembly of citizens, and those having the rights of citizenship for the transaction of public affairs in a free Greek city. The Greek intent refers to calling out its *citizens* to assemble.

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We see that meaning in the book of Acts, when the merchants and craftsmen of idols in the polytheistic city of Ephesus rose up against Paul for turning people away from idolatry and by doing so jeopardized their livelihoods from making and selling idols. This was a thriving business for there was no shortage of gods this city worshipped (Acts 19:26-41). In these passages ekklesia is translated assembly just as it could also be in all occurrences of the word. In Ephesus the citizens were called out to assemble in the theater where they were whipped into frenzy by the merchants who saw the Jewish disciples and Paul as a major threat to their livelihood.

In Scripture, ekklesia is used in the sense of calling out the citizens of God to assemble. Ekklesia always refers to the *people* being called out and never to the place or location of the assembled. Back in 2002, we did a bible study on [The Church](#) and have a full exegesis with definitions and a listing of every Scripture where the word ekklesia appears as a basis for a contextual study. That earlier study focused upon the theology of church while this study shall emphasize the form and structure of the church. If you're reading this document online, the blue underlined words and phrases are hyperlinks to the appropriate study. For those of you not online, go to: TheLordsChildren.org/bible_study/biblestudy.htm

Never does ekklesia refer to a building or a location in the Greek language or in Scripture. Calling a building a church is unbiblical, unjustifiable and something that should never be done or for that matter tolerated by the ekklesia. Church is never where you go, but who you are in Christ Jesus. When Paul established or visited the ekklesia, they are mostly referred to simply as the church (Acts 14:27, 18:22); as the ekklesia of God (Acts 20:28; 1Cor. 10:32); as the ekklesia of Christ (Rom. 16:16); or as the ekklesia at a city or region, i.e. at Antioch, at Jerusalem, of the Gentiles (Rom. 16:4); and as a **family** of believers that regularly meet in a specific personal residence (Acts 16:5). Never does ekklesia refer to a structure or building but always refers to the people called to assemble. The first error has just been identified simply by examining the definition of the word ekklesia: **Church is not a building or a specific location**. The meaning of church was altered from flesh and blood to brick and mortar hundreds of years after the canon of Scripture closed. What a travesty. So much is lost when ekklesia is reduced to a building structure.

Scripture uses other terms to express a gathering together or assembling specifically applied to the people of God. The Greek word ἐπισυναγωγή *episunagoge* (*ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay'*) is used twice; in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and in Hebrews 10:25

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our **gathering together** <episunagoge> to Him,

Hebrews 10:25

not forsaking our own **assembling together** <episunagoge>, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

In Second Thessalonians the term is referring more to the time when Jesus gathers all the believers together at His second coming and Hebrews is speaking of the regular assembly of the ekklesia. When a term to assemble to a specific brick and mortar building is used the Greek term συναγωγή *sunagoge* (*soon-ag-o-gay'*) that is almost always translated synagogue, and means the assembling of the Jews for their Sabbath observances. It is used to describe the house where they met in James 2:2.

James 2:2

For if a man comes into your **assembly** <sunagoge> with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

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The King James bibles translate sunagoge as congregation in Acts 13:43 to describe the ending of the synagogue services in Antioch where Paul preached Jesus as Messiah and the Gentiles attending the Sabbath services inquired of Paul to continue to tell them more about the Jesus.

Acts 13:43

Now when the **congregation <sunagoge>** was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

This is probably not a good translation of synagogue, but neither is it bad for though it was the “brick and mortar” synagogue service that ended, the spirit of the verse remains the same without any loss of meaning, so no harm, no foul. However, as you can begin to discern, I advocate a translation that most closely identifies the pure intent of the literal meaning of God’s inspired Word.

There is other very general terms for gathering that sometimes refers to a gathering of God’s people and sometimes it does not. The context in which it is used shall determine its meaning. For example, when Jesus uses the Greek term *συνάγω* sunago (*soon-ag’-o*) in Matthew 18:20 it is used in context of a church gathering but when Jesus uses that same word in Matthew 25:32 it is used as a gathering of all humanity for the final judgment when He separates the saved from the unsaved.

Matthew 18:20

"For where two or three have gathered together **<4863 sunago>** in My name, I am there in their midst."

Matthew 25:32

"All the nations will be **gathered <4863 sunago>** before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

The other Greek word used is *συνέρχομαι* sunerchomai (*soon-er’-khom-ahee*) and the context shall also determine its meaning for church assembly

1 Corinthians 14:26

What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you **assemble <sunerchomai>**, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

What is clear from the above, the ekklesia is the term used to express the church, the gathering of believers, the people of God.

Foundation

The parable of Jesus equates the house built upon the Rock is His church in Matthew 7, verses 24-27. Most should understand that Jesus spoke in parables to disguise His message and to hide its truth from the masses, from those not being called by God at that moment in time. Jesus is not speaking about the principles for building a private residence but for building of the house of God which is His body of flesh and blood and spirit.

Matthew 7:24

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."

Everyone who hears these words is referencing back to what Jesus was teaching immediately prior to speaking these words... Judgment and Salvation. Acting upon His teaching is the mechanism of faith which like grace and

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salvation is the gift of God. These are the acts of the wise man, the one who responds to the call of God in faith and builds his house upon the only sure foundation, **upon the rock which is God.**

There are some who would have you believe this rock is Peter, but that is a gross misinterpretation of Scripture as we shall see. **The church is built upon God, not man; it is built upon Jesus, not Peter.**

Matthew 16:18

"I also say to you that you are **Peter** <Petros>, and upon this **rock** <Petra> I will build My **church** <ekklesia>; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

This is an important verse to exegete for only by doing so will we see Jesus' play on words with Petros and Petra. Jesus is referring to Himself, Petra as the foundation and only then can Peter, Petros be entrusted with the keys to heaven. The Greek word Πέτρος Petros (pet'-ros) means stone or rock and the new name given to Cephas by Jesus Himself. Jesus on the other hand is the πέτρα Petra (pet'-ra), the huge rock, cliff or ledge like that of the rock of Gibraltar and not that of the much smaller rock or stone but the same in substance. Jesus is often called the Rock in both Old and New Covenants (Deut. 32:4, 1Sam. 2:2, 1Cor. 10:4) and He is indeed our Rock of Salvation and the foundation of the church. It is Jesus and not Peter who is the foundation for the ekklesia. We have an in-depth study on this verse called [Upon This Rock: Jesus or Peter?](#)

But Jesus is not yet done with His analogy and parable in Matthew 7, for He goes on to teach the following:

Matthew 7:26-27

"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall."

We see their fall recorded in the book of Revelation at the return of Messiah Jesus. Only in Scripture can we see a future event as a historical record for that is the surety of the God we worship. This fall is the great number of people who are deceived by the antichrist because they built their house upon the foundation of Peter which is a house of sand. Peter would be the first in line to rebuke those who see him and not Christ their foundation, for they who do this embrace false doctrine, apostasy and the darkness of Satan who disguises himself as an angel of light and are destined for a great fall. Jesus once again speaks of this in another parable of the strong man in Matthew 12:25-29. The Pharisees accused the miracles of Jesus as coming from demons and Jesus rebukes them then gives us this parable:

Matthew 12:29

"Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong [man?] And then he will plunder his house.

When Jesus is not the foundation the strong man of the house is overpowered by Satan who robs the house of God of its goods and possessions which is the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. That house does not have the protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit but only makes false claims of divine protection.

Satan and his deceptions live in the realm of eisegesis, putting into the Word of God that which is not there by bending and twisting Scripture to conform to preconceived notions and beliefs not from God. The converse is exegesis which is taking from Scripture that which is truly there.

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Function

The body of Christ is the transformational spiritual organism of all those saved by grace through faith since the creation of Adam. Those of the body, the ekklesia are called out to assemble together to do what? ... And why?

This goes to the heart of Salvation, Sanctification and why God established the assembly of those He called out this world's systems. We are redeemed and saved by God to DO good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For **by grace** you have been **saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Wow! In three verses it is all summed up. Works will never bring us to Salvation ... but will always proceed from Salvation. I simply cannot fathom why this is an impossible concept for so many teachers of the new covenant to grasp?

1. For by **grace** you have been **saved through faith** ... AMEN to that and thank you God!
2. Not as a **result** of works ... grace negates works, Salvation *cannot* be earned!
3. Created in Christ Jesus **for** good works ... obedience and works are the fruit and the reason for Salvation!

It's as clear as 1... 2... 3. Works is the fruit of Salvation and also the reason God grants spiritual gifts to His ekklesia. We will not in this study delve into the spiritual gifts for that will only serve to side-track this study though it is an important discussion and study. If you'd like to do a study on this topic, we have several studies available on our website in the [Ecclesiology](#) (church) section and other sections as well.

There are other functions for why the ekklesia meet together and most of these reasons are indeed studies unto themselves. When we have those written studies, we shall link to them. If you are reading this from printed paper, our website is TheLordsChildren.org/bible_study.

Koinonia (koy-nohn-ee'-ah) is without question the single most important function God has for His ekklesia. We at The Lord's Children focus upon the use of the original Greek and Hebrew words used in Scripture because in order to shift away from any non-biblical understandings of the English translations, we want to establish a new frame of reference to garner the effective change. Here's how koinonia has been translated in the two literal translation bibles available today, the New American Standard Bible 1995 edition (NAS) and the King James Authorized Version (AV). The number in parentheses means the number of time koinonia was translated using that word.

NAS: contribution (2), fellowship (12), participation (2), sharing (3).

AV: fellowship 12, communion 4, communication 1, distribution 1, contribution 1.

As we can see from the above, fellowship is the root meaning for koinonia but not in the manner of our current understanding of fellowship, for koinonia goes much deeper than that. For example, the *shared intimacy* between a husband and wife is consistent with the biblical understanding for fellowship. Koinonia has an *intensity* that is not generally understood with our use of the word fellowship. Koinonia also has the sense of the intensity of joint *participation* and the *pledge* between partners in a business venture. Koinonia is always something wrapped in *love* and *worship*, for when and where there is true love, koinonia shall flourish.

What koinonia represents is far more than the type of fellowship expressed through general friendship, buddies getting together to enjoy each other's company, women gathering for tea and conversation and the general interaction of people who genuinely like each other. This is not koinonia and we simply cannot apply that to mean

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friends getting together socially. While that is something that should absolutely be done, it is not what is meant when the church gathers together in koinonia, fellowship or communion.

For many in Christendom, communion which is a translation of koinonia in four verses of the King James Authorized Version has taken on a meaning and practice that moves us away from the depth of meaning in Scripture. For some it only means the ritual taking of the host or bread as part of the Lord's Supper and in this manner limits koinonia of the ekklesia. **Koinonia with God is the reason for coming together as a church.** We koinonia with God together every time we assemble for that is the reason we come together at all. If you interpret koinonia only to mean the taking of bread and wine in commemoration of the Lord's Supper every time we meet, you like I once did must engage in further bible study to gain the fullness and meaning of God when He speaks of koinonia. Old habits and limited understandings are sometimes a hard thing to break.

Others interpret and practice koinonia to mean fellowship with one another rather than our shared fellowship with God. Fellowship with each other is not what God commands in Scripture for coming together as His ekklesia. Socialization, picnics and social activities are not the reason we come together as a church. We assemble together in the name of God. There are a few studies we've done on the [Lord's Supper](#) and [Fellowship](#) that may be useful for gaining a deeper understanding for what God expects from church fellowship. **Meals** and the **Lord's Supper** are inextricably connected with koinonia, especially with the Middle Eastern cultures. Sharing of meals is a sharing of the spirit and essence of one another partaking in the meal. **Worship, Prayer, Praise** and **Discipling** are central to our intimate fellowship with God and are in-fact inseparable from koinonia.

Discipling: Without question discipling is why we come together for it is only through this process under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit we come to know God. The discipleship of the ekklesia was an extremely important function because unlike us, they did not have *personal copies* of the Old Covenant Scrolls and personal copies of the letters (Epistles) from the apostles and prophets that became the New Covenant Scripture. While we do have the "scrolls" at our disposal, for many it has become a dust collecting relic that is there simply to be there. So this function has great importance then and now. Put another way, discipleship is a ministry of the Holy Spirit that He performs through gifts provided the ekklesia when in koinonia with God. Making disciples is the clear apostolic command that Jesus commanded His Apostles:

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

A disciple is a student or pupil of God. All ekklesia are disciples! What? Yes, that's right. Everyone in the church is a disciple. Is that true today? It's not intended to be a rhetorical question, but should I make it one? Disciples are the ones commanded to be baptized.

But wait, is there not evidence in Scripture that all the people we see accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior were baptized? Yes, there most certainly is because all ekklesia are disciples and they came together to learn about God and His ways. We are greatly missing the mark on that bit of Scriptural truth. The entire church is a disciple of Christ. This is the ekklesia koinonia of disciples. The church is established for this purpose and that is what they did.

Is this what we are doing?

Don't confuse a "discipleship class" and a "communion service" as something that even remotely is fulfilling the biblical command. What we see happening today is not even a shadow for the substance of what is ekklesia koinonia. It has gotten so bad today, that a false movement has emerged proclaiming that a disciple is a "special

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calling” of those in the church and it is only they who are to be baptized as a misunderstanding of Matthew 28:19. Well clearly this is false because this contemporary body of “believers” have moved so far from the biblical standard that only a few may be considered true disciples. It’s a movement emerged from frustration but to replace one error with another is hardly drawing closer to God in spirit and truth. While I understand their frustration and angst, it’s enough to make you cry and shake your head.

We contend that nobody can read the Scriptures on a regular and consistent basis without having it impact their life one way or another. Fortunately, there are but a few who are so committed to their blindness that they refuse to allow even the smallest glimmer of the light to penetrate their passionately held darkness. Discipling is a primary function whenever we come together as a church. Sermons (preaching) are for evangelism and to proclaim the gospel and that is to mainly for those *outside* the church, where God draws them inside the church to disciple and koinonia. The contemporary model seems to “miss the mark” on this also. That is why most congregations are not an ekklesia of disciples.

The ekklesia are those called out of the world to assemble together to disciple and koinonia. The ekklesia is not meant to be a “mixed” company of believers and non-believers, though it will always be that for it is humanly impossible for there to be only 100% disciples assembling together on a regular basis. That being said, this does not mean that disciples are to be the overwhelming minority in the assembly either. Because it cannot be all does not mean only a few. The assembly exists for disciples to have koinonia with God together with other disciples.

Frequency

Is there anything in Scripture to tell us when and how often the ekklesia are to assemble?

The church met daily, not once a week: The biblical model the apostles applied to themselves in Jerusalem and everywhere else in Scripture has the ekklesia meeting with each other daily, not once a week on Sunday.

Acts 2:46-47

And they, continuing **daily <kata hemera>** with one accord in the temple, and **breaking bread from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church **daily <kata hemera>** such as should be saved.

What I serendipitously discovered when doing an exegesis on the practice of breaking bread from house to house, I came upon a Greek phrase that is translated into English as daily, which I thought was odd for there are not many Greek phrases that can be rightly translated into one English word and retaining the full meaning of the Greek. It is not unusual to have one Greek word translated into an English phrase, but a Greek phrase translated into one English word? I thought this required additional investigation. As it turns this Greek phrase *kata hemera* appears 15 times in Scripture and is always translated as day by day and daily. Kata (kat-ah’) is a preposition that generally means throughout or covering the entire period; and hemera (hay-mer’-ah) means of the daylight or daytime portion of the day. It could be translated as throughout the daylight hours or throughout the day.

This phrase offers a slightly different meaning in that hemera implies openly and not stealthily during the daylight portion of the day and stands in contrast or opposition to the dark or night-time portion of the day that a criminal or thief would use so as to engage in their illegal or secretive activities they do not want known. By using this phrase it means no attempt to “cover-up” their activities and implies activities the participant engages in not ashamedly and with boldness as if to say, “Look, I’ve nothing to hide for I do this openly in the light of day for all to see.” I’d never have gotten this understanding without looking a little deeper into such a common word as daily. God is good, no? Let’s continue.

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The early church engaged in preaching activities every day at the temple in Jerusalem, most likely in the court of the Gentiles where Solomon's Porch is located and where all ethnic groups could assemble, meet, preach, teach and exchange information. It was like a community center or town square of old. They also went from house to house to disciple, pray, praise and sing and to daily break bread, and yes this can be understood as partaking in the [Lord's Supper](#) despite much teaching to the contrary. When religions establish a practice, they will do whatever is necessary to preserve such practice. Do read that study on the topic.

Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures **daily** [to see] whether these things were so.

Remember, nobody at that time had personal scrolls to simply sit at home and read to see whether these things be so. They had to go to their synagogue to read the scrolls and test whether the things Paul taught were true or not. We would all do well to emulate the Bereans and study the Word and test whether the things said in these studies properly and consistently reveal truthful understanding of Scripture.

The apostles undoubtedly obtained this tradition to assemble the ekklesia daily to disciple and koinonia from the example of Jesus who taught daily in the temple at Jerusalem including every Sabbath.

Luke 19:47

And He was **teaching daily in the temple**; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,

It is not just the above verses that establish the tradition of daily teaching by Jesus that the apostles applied to disciple the ekklesia in daily koinonia: Matthew 26:55; Mark 14:49; Luke 19:47, 22:53, Acts 16:4-5.

The church met in private homes: Scripture teaches us God had His church not only meet daily but met in private homes, not in temples, not in synagogues and not in any building called a church which we already established to be contrary to meaning of ekklesia. We will examine the Scriptures and especially those that some claim speak to a regular once-a-week public place for worship that is not a private home or a rented facility used to gather all the ekklesia in a city or region. Let's begin by showing the primary meeting place is private homes and houses.

Acts 5:42

And **every day, in the temple and from house to house**, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus [as] the Christ.

It should be clear in Scripture that not every occurrence of the term house is speaking of a private dwelling, for instance when Scriptures speak of the house of Israel. It should be clear that it is speaking of the kingdom and all the descendants of Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. Context determines how it is to be understood.

When Jesus was resurrected and showed Himself to the disciples before He ascended, He commanded them to remain in Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4) which was on the Old Covenant feast day called Pentecost.

Ac 1:13-14

When they had entered [the city,] they went up to the **upper room where they were staying**; that is, **Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James** [the son] of Alphaeus, and **Simon** the Zealot, and **Judas** [the] [son] of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with [the] **women**, and **Mary** the mother of Jesus, and with **His brothers**.

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The upper room in Jerusalem was a typical design in Middle Eastern cultures which used the upper rooms of homes for large gatherings. We see this same design in Acts 20 when Paul visited the coastal city of Troas, in what is now modern day Turkey. Upper rooms of homes were certainly large enough to accommodate many people for we know at least 120 assembled in the Jerusalem residence the 11 apostles and at least 5-8 other adults according to Acts 1:15.

The church met daily for prayer and worship in the Jerusalem upper room up through the feast of Pentecost which marked the initial coming of the Holy Spirit's ministry to the ekklesia under the New Covenant promise of the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit did come the miraculous sounds coming from that upper room attracted many of the Jews who were in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, also called the feast of weeks. In all, their upper room residence was able to hold 100+ people and we know from Scripture that 3,000 were baptized that very day because of Peter's preaching after receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41).

The early church established and continued with their pattern of meeting daily from house to house even though this practice was contrary to Jewish culture which met every Sabbath in synagogues and in the temple when in Jerusalem. This meeting in homes was also not due to any lack of finances to purchase or build a place of worship for the early church was flush with financial strength and resources.

Acts 4:34

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

The Jerusalem church began to grow exponentially for people were coming to the apostles and disciples from all the surrounding regions for miraculous healings, to contribute financially and become one of the ekklesia. The apostles applied their resources to establish a daily food program for widows and the needy, not to construct a building for the thousands of people in the ekklesia. Stephen and six others were selected to oversee the food ministry (Acts 6:1-7). And the church continued to grow daily and disciple many, all from their homes. (Acts 5:42)

The church was meeting in houses when Saul, who later had his name changed to Paul by Jesus, was coming into the houses during their meetings and arresting and persecuting the ekklesia. As it says in 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." He dragged the ekklesia away while they met together to disciple and koinonia.

When the apostle Peter was miraculously released from Herod's prison, he immediately made his way to the home of Mary where the ekklesia was meeting at the very time Peter showed up and knocked on their door.

Acts 12:12

And when he realized [this,] he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where **many were gathered together** and were **praying**.

This is also the way it was with the new convert Jason of Thessalonica who also had people coming to his house to disciple and pray when the Jews had them arrested on false charges (Acts 17:5-7); house churches were established in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-20); and Paul himself when he was in Rome had a private apartment and for two years where he disciplined and preached to all who came to him (Acts 28:30); Priscilla and Aquila had a house church in Corinth, where Paul wrote his Romans Epistle (1Cor. 16:19) as well as many of the Gentiles (Romans 16:3-5); There appears to be a church at Chloe's home (1Cor. 1:11); and Stephanus (1Cor 16:15); Caesar (Phil 4:22); Nymphas (Col. 4:15); Onesiphorus (1Tim 4:19, 2Tim 1:16); Apphia and Archippus (Philemon 1:2) and many, many others.

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Paul in his letters to Timothy cautions him on proper church oversight, rebuking Gnosticism and also about some of the widows who improperly seek financial support from the church while not being fruitful laborers for Christ but rather lazy and prone to idle gossip as they attended church from house to house (1Tim 5:13); and those who creep into the house churches to lead astray gullible women (2Tim 3:6). Paul also writes to Titus to be on guard against the false teachers who can corrupt an entire church by going house-to-house (Titus 1:11) as well as John who writes to the elect lady to beware of allowing false teachers who deny Christ and introduce false doctrine into her house church (2John 10).

It was also customary for many of those who either lived in or rented houses with an upper room to meet daily and break bread to commemorate the Lord's Supper. When the Scripture describes this event in Acts 20, some took the verse out of context to support pet doctrines like a new Sunday Sabbath and/or a once-a-week meeting on Sunday, both of which is not supported in Scripture. When the practice of the early church was to meet daily, it stands to reason that Sunday, the first day of the week would be included. Scriptures also show the ekklesia meeting on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week to preach Jesus.

Acts 13:14

¶ But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Does this support a seventh day Sabbath observance? Of course not, though there are some in Christendom that do such a thing. Let's examine Paul's visit to Troas the day before he sailed to make his way back to Jerusalem to see if this verse demonstrates a practice of the early church to break bread for the Lord's Supper every Sunday. (Acts 20:7-12).

Acts 20:7

¶ On the **first day of the week**, when we were **gathered together to break bread**, Paul [began] talking to them, **intending to leave the next day**, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

Paul established this church and this was a special treat having Paul back for only a 7-day period (verse 6) and this was the last day before he was scheduled to set sail in the morning for his return to Jerusalem. This was a special occasion and the upper room in Troas may have been in the home of a member but more than likely was a rented house so all the church could come together to say farewell to Paul. Troas, like most places met regularly, possibly daily and house to house. This was no doubt a large enough facility to accommodate all in the church who desired to say goodbye to their beloved Apostle. The breaking of bread for the Lord's Supper was something most likely done every time they met. To say this verse establishes a once-a-week assembly when we see that the custom was daily and from house-to-house, is a stretch.

Without knowing the practice of the day, one could interpret this verse that way. Nonetheless, **God does not command a frequency for the ekklesia to assemble nor does God establish a frequency for partaking in the breaking of bread for the Lord's Supper.** Churches are free to determine this for themselves. What we are seeing is a description of what the ekklesia of Scripture did and this is not the same as saying this is a prescription for what we or any else is to do. The new Covenant simply does not have the same principles of operation that the Old Covenant did. We are of the Spirit with freedom to be led by the Spirit. There are commands to be followed by those in the New Covenant, but there are no commands regarding the frequency of assembly or the frequency for the Lord's Supper.

So, my question is why do some insist upon twisting God's Word to make it conform to their private desires? Habit, tradition and justification are but three non-cynical reasons to advance though I can come up with others. Knowing the practice of the early church, there is no way to justify a once-per-week assembly as a command of Scripture. With that truth in hand it is categorically false and is a violation of Scripture to then claim that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. Old Covenant law is fulfilled in Messiah Jesus and under no circumstance can any claim

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or even intimate that the Sabbath is changed from Saturday to Sunday for that will violate the Messianic ministry of Christ. If we are to do anything along those lines we are to see how Jesus is fulfillment of the Sabbath and feast day requirements under the Old Covenant Law. Scripture does have much to say about that and we do have several studies on that subject in the [Ecclesiology](#) section of our bible study site.

Why is it that those who choose to apply this verse to a once-per-week Sunday assembly of the ekklesia do not also apply this to a once-per-week Lord's Supper? Even if we concede a pattern for the ekklesia at Troas to meet every Sunday to disciple and koinonia, why incorrectly parse this verse to cherry pick one doctrine over another? If one claims that Acts 20:7 established a once-per-week Sunday observance, then it must also claim that breaking bread for Lord's Supper is also established as a once-per-week observance. Should not the same standard apply to both the former and latter in the same context in the same verse? Well, it appears not for some, though it should. Some would rather twist and parse the text to state what they want it to state and not what actually is being stated. Such cavalier treatment of the Scripture is disturbing. When eisegesis rules at one verse, it rules every verse.

Form

Jesus Himself uses the **family** to illustrate His church for the ekklesia is the family of God and the household of God. Jesus equates Himself as the Head of household with those of the household under the authority of the husband and the father. This structure applies to both the family and the church.

Matthew 10:25

"It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the **head of the house** Beelzebul, how much more [will they malign] the members of his household!

This structure is consistent with the image and likeness of God in man, marriage and family. We worship God but give honor to father and mother; we pray to God but speak intimately with our family members; we praise God and encourage and uplift all who bear His image. The family is the model used to describe our saving relationship with the living God and as such would not the home ekklesia koinonia model lend itself to that?

The Lord's Children ministry seeks to remain as true to the form and function of the ekklesia as revealed in Scripture. While not commanded to be a house church, we chose to be a house church with house-to-house koinonia and Jesus as the foundation for our fellowship with God together. Should the Lord see fit to add to our number, we plan to continue with the house church model and to regularly assemble with all the regional house churches and any other born-again believer that desire koinonia with God together with us. Each house church determines for themselves days and times for koinonia.

Scripture teaches us that the model of one pastor being the decision-maker for the local church is not biblically sound. We adopt the house church model because all the teaching in Scripture is based upon that model. Every local gathering of the church will always have consistent functions that they all share in common like: Koinonia, Discipling and Prayer but also be led by the Holy Spirit's gifts of ministry to those attending the local fellowships.

When Scripture describes a new ekklesia being established in a new area one of the first orders of business after discipleship is to appoint [elders](#). The elder is not some lower level position under a pastor, but is how the church is to function and operate as a spiritual organism of the body of Christ. An elder is inclusive of the offices in the church like that of a minister, servant, pastor, deacon, overseer, bishop, priest, preacher and teacher. All these positions are considered elders of the ekklesia. The biblical standard for teaching is for those disciples gifted by the Holy Spirit to disciple others. Just as all families have business, financial and family decisions to make, so it is with the ekklesia. Two examples of this we see in Scripture is when the church came together to appoint a

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replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26); and when they determined to establish a feeding ministry to the widows and the poor (Acts 6:1-6).

All *spiritual* church functions fall under one of the two major functions previously established in Scripture: Koinonia and Discipleship. We'll list what activities are associated with these two functions with links to bible studies on those topics.

Koinonia	Disciple
Love	Baptism
Faith	Laying on of hands
Prayer	Study of Scripture
Worship	Evangelism
Praise	Gifts of the Spirit
Lord's Supper	Teaching
Singing hymns	Preaching the gospel
Obedience to God	Ministry

Where there is no linked bible study (yet), we will engage right now with word definitions that will at least provide you with a basic understanding of the terms used in Scripture so you can contemplate the meaning and implications in your own life. We will exegete and post them to the website soon.

Worship: Introspective devotion to God. Its usage in Scripture comes from several Greek words translated as worship listed below. We can see by the definitions for worship that music is not as aspect of worship, but of praise which have differing meanings and purposes.

προσκυνέω proskuneo (pros-koo-neh'-o)

from 4314 and a probable derivative of 2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); v; TDNT-6:758,948; { See TDNT 670 }

NAS-bow down (1), bow down before (1), bowed down (1), bowed down before (2), bowing before (1), bowing down (1), prostrated himself before (1), worship (32), worshiped (17), worshipers (1), worshipping (1), worships (1).

AV-worship 60; 60

1) to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence

2) among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence

3) in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication

3a) used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank

3a1) to the Jewish high priests

3a2) to God

3a3) to Christ

3a4) to heavenly beings

3a5) to demons

σεβομαι sebomai (seb'-om-ahee)

middle voice of an apparently primary verb; v; TDNT-7:169,1010; { See TDNT 705 }

NAS-devout (1), God-fearing (3), worship (4), worshiper (2).

AV-worship 6, devout 3, religious 1; 10

1) to revere, to worship

λατρεύω latreuo (lat-ryoo'-o)

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from *latris* (a hired menial); v; TDNT-4:58,503; { See TDNT 428 }

NAS-offer (1), serve (15), served (1), service (1), serving (1), worship (1), worshiper (1), worshipers (1).

AV-serve 16, worship 3, do the service 1, worshiper 1; 21

1) to serve for hire

2) to serve, minister to, either to the gods or men and used alike of slaves and freemen

2a) in the NT, to render religious service or homage, to worship

2b) to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship

2b1) of priests, to officiate, to discharge the sacred office

θησκαία threskeia (thrace-ki'-ah)

from a derivative of 2357; n f; TDNT-3:155,337; { See TDNT 313 }

NAS-religion (3), worship (1).

AV-religion 3, worshipping 1; 4

1) religious worship

1a) esp. external, that which consists of ceremonies

1a1) religious discipline, religion

This term is used primarily in the negative, things we are not to worship.

Praise: Praise is another essential aspect of our relationship with our God. Praise differs from worship in the sense that it is **extrospective thankfulness** (we give) to God for all His Divine attributes ... especially love, and for His grace in offering His precious gift of Salvation through Jesus our Messiah. Singing is a very vital aspect to praise for it helps express our joy in the Lord.

δοξάζω doxazo (dox-ad'-zo)

from 1391; v; TDNT-2:253,178; { See TDNT 197 }

NAS-full of glory (1), glorified (20), glorifies (1), glorify (19), glorifying (12), had glory (1), has ... glory (1), honor (1), honored (2), magnify (1), praised (1), praising (1).

AV-glorify 54, honor 3, have glory 2, magnify 1, make glorious 1, full of glory 1; 62

1) to think, suppose, be of opinion

2) to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate

3) to honor, do honor to, hold in honor

4) to make glorious, adorn with luster, clothe with splendor

4a) to impart glory to something, render it excellent

4b) to make renowned, render illustrious

4b1) to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged

ἑξομολογέω exomologeō (ex-om-ol-og-eh'-o)

from 1537 and 3670; v; TDNT-5:199,687; { See TDNT 551 }

NAS-confess (2), confessed (1), confessing (2), consented (1), give praise (2), praise (2).

AV-confess 8, thank 2, promise 1; 11

1) to confess

2) to profess

2a) acknowledge openly and joyfully

2b) to one's honor: to celebrate, give praise to

2c) to profess that one will do something, to promise, agree, engage

αἰνέω aineō (ahee-neh'-o)

from 136; v; TDNT-1:177,27; { See TDNT 32 }

NAS-give praise (1), praise (2), praising (5).

AV-praise 9; 9

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- 1) to praise, extol, to sing praises in honor to God
- 2) to allow, recommend
- 3) to promise or vow

ψάλλω psallo (*psal'-lo*)

probably strengthened from psao (to rub or touch the surface, cf [5597](#)); v; TDNT-8:489,1225; { See TDNT 809 }

NAS-making melody (1), sing (3), sing praises (1).

AV-sing 3, sing psalms 1, make melody 1; 5

1) to pluck off, pull out

2) to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang

2a) to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate

2b) to play on a stringed instrument, to play, the harp, etc.

2c) to sing to the music of the harp

2d) in the NT to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song

ὕμνέω humneo (*hoom-neh'-o*)

from [5215](#); v; TDNT-8:489,1225; { See TDNT 809 }

NAS-sing ... praise (1), singing a hymn (2), singing hymns (1), singing hymns of praise (1).

AV-sing an hymn 2, sing praise 2; 4

1) to sing the praise of, sing hymns to sing

2a) singing of Passover hymns these were Psalms 113-118 and 136, which the Jews called the "great Hallel"

Conclusion

Scripture has much to say about ekklesia who are also called brothers and sisters, disciples, Christians and saints. All these word are interchangeable terms to describe the ekklesia. What this study reveals is that many today are not ekklesia as described in Scripture. All the church is disciples and far too many are not disciples. That is why there are such problems in the church today.

I believe that economics and mortgages on building have much to do with why true biblical teaching has become a low priority. When the Word is taught, the flesh is repulsed for the carnal mind is hostile to God and cannot be subject to God, even if it wanted to, which it does not. To attract and retain enough members, compromising on the biblical standard for who is a saved member of the body of Christ has deteriorated greatly. While we will not get into a discussion on Salvation and the fruits of Salvation at this time in this study suffice to say that not all claiming Salvation have Salvation and not all claiming to be of The Body are of The Body. What many are being taught and told about Salvation is twisting grace to mean licentiousness and the removal of faith from Salvation.

For those who claim we are saved by grace alone are not on solid scriptural ground for we are saved by grace through FAITH and both are gifts of God. Nobody has the authority apart from Jesus Christ Himself to come up with a different standard for salvation. There can be no deviation from this salvation standard, for once deviation occurs, Salvation dissipates.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For **you have been saved by grace through faith**; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the **gift of God; not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that **we would walk** in them.

Grace through faith means through faith. The removal of faith to mean grace alone is contrary to God and His Word. Neither grace nor faith is ours for both are gifts from God and both must work together to produce a regenerate soul in Christ. Jesus told us we know a tree by its fruit and for anyone not in obedience to the truth of

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Jesus and the apostles does not bear the fruit of salvation because where there is no salvation there is no fruit to bear. The branches are dead because they grew on the tree of apostasy. Any tree that does not bear fruit is torn up and discarded and reserved for the fires of destruction. Heed the words of Jesus in John 15:2, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, **He takes away**; and every [branch] that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."

We are either broken off (removed) or pruned (suffering and persecutions). Some see both options as undesirable, but they are the only two options God grants His ekklesia. Those broken off do not represent a loss of Salvation, but those who believe they are saved because they are on the vine of Christ, but are broken off because they never had the life giving water (Holy Spirit) flow through them to bear fruit. Salvation is wholly the work of God and God tells us that His mechanism of grace is through faith and that the purpose of our Salvation is to bear fruit.

It is those saved by grace through faith that are of the body of Christ and good works always follow. That is the function of the ekklesia... to do good works. Salvation is not the finish line but the starting line for the race God has assigned for each to run, and that race is predestined for each and every saved soul in Christ Jesus. That's what *prepared beforehand* means. We are saved by grace through faith ... but we are judged by our works! Both believer and non-believer stand before God to be judged.

2Corinthians 5:10

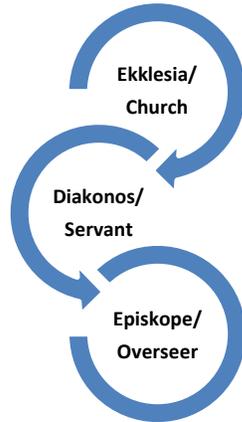
For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

James 3:1

¶ Let not many [of you] become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Those who teach need to be diligent to make certain they are rightly teaching the truth of God for in them lays a stricter and harsher judgment. For those who teach as to lead astray have the black darkness [ζόφος zophos (dzof'-os) σκότος skotos (skot'-os) of the abyss awaiting them (Jude 13). I better stop here before I launch into a new study. God's tapestry is so perfectly interwoven it's too easy to slide into other truths of God. Grace and Peace!

New Covenant Body of Christ (Church) Structure



Ekklesia (church): All the ekklesia are the body of Christ called out to assemble as local churches. The local church is those saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph 2:8-10). The Apostolic model is for the ekklesia assemble together in private homes for the two primary functions of koinonia and discipleship. All the ekklesia are Elect Disciples and called brethren and saints. All these terms apply to all the ekklesia:

- The Elect (Eklektos)
- Disciple (Mathetes)
- Brethren (Adelphos & Adelphe)
- Saint (Hagios)

Diakonos (servant): God grants to each of the ekklesia gifts (charisma) in accordance to His grace and purpose to accomplish and perform a specific ministry as a servant or deacon for the local ekklesia. Diakonos has been translated deacon in some passages but deacon is not so much an office in the church as it is qualifications for God ordained service to the ekklesia (church). Jesus is diakonos (servant, Mt 20:28) and the Apostles are diakonos (ministers, 1Cor 3:5) as are all positions in the church. God gifts the ekklesia with all that is needed to perform their God ordained purpose. Each gift must be a *genuine* gift and tested by the biblical standard for each gift. By genuine, it is meant not proclaiming a gift where the evidence is not present. For example, the gift of teaching means one has received from God the skill-set to teach; if tongues it is a known human language not previously known or taught to the recipient; if healing that a true disease or malady exists that it is miraculously and permanently removed. Here is a partial listing of servant functions and gifts to perform their functions.

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| • Evangelist | • Word of Wisdom | • Word of Knowledge |
| • Preacher | • Teaching | • Discerning of Spirits |
| • Teacher | • Exhortation | • Helps |
| • Preacher-Teacher | • Mercy | • Leadership |

Episkope (overseer): Those of the ekklesia who are recipients of God's gifts suitable as a diakonos may be selected as an Episkope, or overseer. An episkope is an elder not merely for a single house church but for all churches in a given region. Scriptural qualifications to serve in each position must be adhered to.

- Apostle (Apostolos): Biblical qualifications unlikely to be met in contemporary Christianity
- Elder (Presbuteros)
- Minister (Leitourgia)
- Shepherd/Pastor (Poimen)