

## Defining the Church

### The New Church

- The seeker-sensitive church
- The contemporary-worship church
- The house church
- The “family-faith experience” or family church
- The cyber-church - a variety of spiritual experiences through the internet
- The emergent church - with visual, mystical experiences
- Non-traditional church experience:
  - Independent worship events
  - Marketplace fellowships
  - Coaching communities
  - Internet faith groups
  - Para-church ministries intended to substitute for the church

### The Primary Causes of the Drift from a Church-centered Life

- From Outside the Church
  - The Pursuit of Materialism
  - The Busyness of Modern Life
  - The Over-commitment of the Family
  - The Quest for Self-fulfillment
  - The Cry for Egalitarianism & Individualism

### The Primary Causes of the Drift from a Church-centered Life

- From Within the Professing Church
  - The Anonymity of the Mega-church
  - The Rise of the Seeker-sensitive Church
  - The Rise & Influence of Para-church Ministries
  - The Decline of Expository Preaching

### The Reasons the Church Matters

- The Example of the NT believers
- The Teaching and Pattern of the Apostles
- The Commands of the NT
- The Priority of Christ

### The Key Words

- The English Word
  - English - *church* (cf. *Scottish - kirk; German - Kirche*)
  - From the Greek, *kuriakon*
    - From *kurios* = Lord
    - Means “belonging to the Lord”
    - Occurs 2x in the NT
      - 1 Cor. 11:20 - “the Lord’s Supper”
      - Rev. 1:10 - “the Lord’s Day”

## The Key Words

- The Greek Word
  - *Ekklesia*
  - *Ek* - "out"; *kaleo* - "to call or summon"
  - Doesn't mean the called out or separated ones
  - Means: "an assembly summoned or called together"

## Ekklesia

- In secular Greek
  - Liddell & Scott: "an assembly of the citizens summoned by the crier; the legislative assembly."
  - Cremer: "the common term for a meeting of the *eklectoi* assembled to discuss the affairs of a free state."
  - Trench: "the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the right of citizenship for the transaction of public affairs."
  - Came to refer to any assembly, regardless of their purpose or their manner of convening.

## Ekklesia

- In the Septuagint (LXX)
  - Primary background for NT usage
  - Almost 100x in the OT
  - Translates the same Hebrew word: *qahal*
  - Saucy: *Qahal* means "an assembly, convocation, or congregation and can be used for almost any type of gathering of people."

## Ekklesia in the OT

- Can refer to:
  - Angels
    - Ps. 89:5 - The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
  - A nation
    - Gen. 28:3 - "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples."
    - Gen. 35:11 - God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you."
  - The congregation of Israel
    - Num. 16:3 - They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"
    - Micah 2:5 - "Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line For you by lot in the assembly of the LORD."

## Ekklesia in the OT

- Can be for the purpose of:
  - Civic affairs
    - 1 Kings 12:3 - Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam.
    - Pr. 5:14 - "I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation."
  - For war
    - Num. 22:4 - Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field."
    - Judges 20:2 - The chiefs of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword.
  - For evil
    - Gen. 49:6 - "Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen."
    - Ps. 26:5 - I hate the assembly of evildoers, And I will not sit with the wicked.
  - For worship
    - Deut. 9:10 (1st OT use) - "The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly."
    - 2 Ch. 20:5 - Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court.
    - Neh. 5:13 - I also shook out the front of my garment and said, "Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise, even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!"

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Frequency
  - 114x in the NT
    - 3x - an assembly of pagan Gentiles
      - Acts 19:32, 41 - of a mob
      - Acts 19:39 - of a lawful assembly
    - 2x - the assembly of Israel in the wilderness
      - Acts 7:38
      - Heb. 2:12 (from LXX of Ps. 22:22)
    - 109 of the NT church (only 3x in the Gospels; Matt. 16:18; 18:17)

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Senses
  - a political assembly (Acts 19:39, 41)
  - the assembly of the nation of Israel at Sinai (Acts 7:38)
  - the church in the house of an individual (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2)
  - most frequently, a local church (Acts 5:11; 11:26; 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:19, 28, 35; cf. Rom. 16:4; 1 Cor. 16:1; Gal. 1:2; 1 Th. 2:14)
  - a group of churches in a region (Acts 9:31)
  - all those throughout the world who profess faith in Christ and organize under appointed officers for the purpose of worship and service (1 Cor. 10:32; 11:22; 12:28)
  - most comprehensively, all who have been actually united to Christ as Lord and Savior (Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 32; Col. 1:18, 24)

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Never:
  - A building
  - A denomination
  - A state church

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Two primary meanings:
  - The local church
    - a local assembly (or assemblies) of all who profess faith in the Christ of Scripture
    - about 92x of the 109x references to the church in the NT
  - The universal church
    - all professing believers everywhere (about 17x in the NT)
    - the whole body of Christ's redeemed
    - further divided into:
      - *Visible*: the universal church as we see it; includes both true believers and false believers.
      - *Invisible*: the universal church as God sees it; includes only the true believers.

## The Application

- The NT does not know a believer who is part of the universal, invisible church, who isn't also a part of a local assembly.
  - To become a Christian = to be added to the church (Acts 5:11-14)
  - The NT letters were written to local churches and their leaders

## The Application

- Be faithful to gather with the church.
  - At the heart of belonging to a local church is "the assembly."
  - Heb. 10:25 - not forsaking our assembling together

## The Application

- Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing as part of the visible church.
  - Matt. 7:15-16 - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?"
  - Acts 20:29-30 - "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."
  - 2 Tim. 2:17-19
  - Opposite danger: assuming people in the church are unbelievers
    - Calvin:
      - We should show "charitable judgment."
      - Recognize as believers, all who "by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ with us."

## The Application

- You can be part of the visible, local church, and not belong to the invisible, universal church.
  - Can belong to the church as we see it, and not belong to the real church as God sees it.
  - E.g., 2 Tim. 4:10 - Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.
  - Call to self-examination
  - James 1:19-27; 2:14ff
  - 2 Cor. 13:5 - Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

## The Application

- One practice that is to be a regular and crucial part of the assembly is The Lord's Table or The Lord's Supper.
  - With other Christians in the context of the church:
    - By example of the early church: Acts 2:42 - the breaking of bread
    - By direct command: 1 Cor. 11:23ff-- do this in remembrance of me.
  - Why?
    - 1 Cor. 10:16-17

