

## “CHURCH”: ANOTHER SENSE

To refresh our memories and prepare for consideration of another facet of Biblical teaching, we quote below from a previous article.

“Nearly all English speaking people think of the term church in a religious, spiritual context. It is assumed, therefore, that the appearance of this word in our translations of the New Testament is an English rendering of a Greek term inherently religious and spiritual.

“In fact, *church* is not actually a translation at all but rather a term coined to convey a religious, spiritual connection and is supplied for the Greek *ekklesia*. However, translated literally, *ekklesia* indicates ‘... a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly...’ (Thayer, pp. 195, 196). According to this authority, and others, *ekklesia* was used by the Greeks to describe an assembly of a community’s citizens who were called out to express their views or to be informed on some public matter.

It should not be surprising, then, to find this Greek word rendered in our New Testament by terms other than church.”

As evidence, we cited *ekklesia* references to Israel as she was called out of Egyptian bondage (Acts 7:38), a riotous mob in Ephesus and a lawful court of law (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).

We then began to concentrate on the subject in mind: the church, the *ekklesia*, Jesus promised to build according to Matthew 16:18. This was, and is, a purely spiritual relationship consisting of fellowship between the saved individual whose name is registered in heaven and God who saves him/her (Hebrews 12:22-24).

However, because *ekklesia* was a common term used to describe many sorts of assemblies of called out people, we should not be surprised to find it used to describe God’s New Testament people (Christians) in a sense other than the general, or universal, sense seen in Hebrews 12:23.

Thus, we observe that the New Testament also uses “church” (from the Greek, *ekklesia*) to describe Christians living in a given locality and joined together to fulfill the service God expects Christians to do collectively, that is, as a congregation (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 1:1-2). Because the local church is “of Christ,” we will devote a few articles to a study of “church” in this sense.

—Jerry F. Bassett