

The Birthday of the Christian Church

Introduction

How many times have we heard it said that the church was birthed on the day of Pentecost? Most modern theologians and commentaries all agree. In fact, Smith Bible Dictionary states “The Day of Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian church.” I wonder how Jesus’ Jewish family members and those Jewish followers who were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) would have thought about the idea of joining “the Christian church”.

The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) would make a new (1) (to repair, to renew) covenant with the house of Judah and Israel.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” (Jeremiah 31:31)

The Prophet Ezekiel also prophesied about the coming new covenant and gives us a clearer picture of what that new covenant’s beginnings would look like:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” (Ezekiel 36: 26-27)

What is amazingly absent from these two passages and indeed the entire Old Testament is the mention of an upcoming new Christian Church.

Interestingly Easton Bible Dictionary makes the following statement with regards to the church: “God has ever had only one church on earth. We sometimes speak of the Old Testament Church and of the New Testament church, but they are one and the same. The Old Testament church was not to be changed but enlarged (Isa 49:13-23; Isa 60:1-14). When the Jews are at length restored, they will not enter a new church, but will be grafted again into “their own olive tree” (Rom 11:18-24; compare Eph 2:11-22). The apostles did not set up a new organization.”

In fact, the Apostle Paul speaks to the Gentiles and calls them cut from a wild olive tree who through the breaking off of the natural branches were “grafted in among them,”. Sounds a bit at odds with the modern theology over the creation of a new never before had existed “church”.

“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit by holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakes of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.” (Romans 11:13-19)

The word “church”

God by His wisdom has chosen words to express Himself to mankind. These words and the subsequent definitions are crucial in understanding what God is communicating. When one begins reading the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) it doesn't take long before you come across the word ‘church’. Jesus makes this statement to the Apostle Peter, “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

The Greek word from which we get our English word church is the word ‘ekklesia’ (which is also where we get the English word ecclesiastical). Ekklesia literally means “a calling out” especially as it refers to a congregation or assembly. In Strong's Concordance the Greek word ekklesia (2) comes from the two Greek words, ‘ek’(3) which means “out of” and the word ‘kaleo’ (4) which means “to call”. The word ‘ekklesia’ is also found translated as the word ‘assembly’ in the King James Version in Acts 19:32, 39, 41.

Interestingly in the first complete English Bible (5) (the Tyndale Bible 1525-26) the word church was not to be found anywhere. Instead of using the word church, which has been thought to have pagan roots, (we will discuss this latter in the

book) the first complete English Bible used the word ‘congregation’ instead of church.

It is important that the reader be reminded that every word is divinely inspired by God. Jesus said it this way, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines the word church as “a building for public and especially Christian worship” and in the majority of the Christian world this definition has transferred over and become lodged within the minds of many as a truth. However, the Scripture gives us another definition when it says, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. (Acts 17:24-25)

The English word church appears 80 times in 79 verses in the King James Version of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament). Amazingly the word church does not appear even once in the Tanach (Old Testament). **Or does it?**

Amazingly in the Greek version of the Old Testament (6) (LXX or Septuagint) which was written approximately 300 years prior to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Greek word ‘ekklesia’ (church) is used many times throughout to translate the Hebrew word ‘qahal’ (7). The LXX used the Greek to translate the Old Testament (from Hebrew), the same Greek which was used for the New Testament writings. So when we read the Old Testament in our English Bibles words such as multitude, company, congregation and assembly they are translated from the Hebrew word ‘qahal’ which in the LXX is always translated ‘ekklesia’. **So we do find the word church in the Old Testament!**

The Hebrew word “qahal” means an assembly, company, congregation, or convocation.

Here are a few examples of this found in the Tanach (Old Testament):

“And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a **multitude** [*H6951 qahal*] of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.” (Genesis 48:4)

“The Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the **assembly** [*H6951 qahal*] of the congregation of the children of Israel.” (Numbers 14:5)

“And Moses spake in the ears of all the **congregation** [*H6951 qahal*] of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.” (Deuteronomy 31:30)

“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the **congregation** [*H6951 qahal*] of saints.” (Psalms 149:1)

“For lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an **assembly** [*H6951 qahal*] of great nations from the north country; and they shall set themselves in array against her, from thence she shall be taken; their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.” (Jeremiah 50:9)

The King James Version and the word ‘church’

In 325 AD, "The Church" joined the State under Constantine, and it was carried through the Reformation. The Reformers were all involved in civil government, such as John Calvin who set up the civil government in Geneva. The pope was the head of the Catholic Church and he was kicked out of England, and King Henry VIII took jurisdiction over the Church. And then when the King James Version was done, it was very important for them to retain the word "church" because they had jurisdiction over it, so King James made fifteen specific edicts, as far as the translation goes, and one of those edicts (edict number three) stated that this bible was to retain the word "church" in the translation and it was not to be replaced with the word "congregation." That was his specific edict. He has no jurisdiction over the congregation (people), but he does over the church (physical buildings). So you can see he never wanted the word "assembly" associated with the original meaning of the Old Testament which meant "congregation." So he knew the correct translation, obviously, but he didn't want it in there, that way they retain control over "the church." (*From Christ's Ekklesia and the Church Compared, by Richard Anthony*)

I Will Build My Church

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

I remind the reader that Jesus spoke Hebrew and was speaking to Hebrews. We can be sure that Jesus was not speaking English to Peter and therefore did not use the word ‘church’. Jesus’ disciples were exclusively members of the commonwealth of Israel. If Jesus did not speak the Hebrew word ‘Qahal’ then he perhaps He used the word “synagogue” or “assembly” which was used throughout the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) when referring to Jewish congregations (53 times in the Gospels and in Acts). Either way, we can be certain it wasn’t the word ‘church’.

The Church in the Wilderness

I would like to apologize for my delay in writing part one as I have been very busy working at the church. I hope it would be obvious to you the reader that I am being sarcastic and not literal as it is virtually impossible to “work at the church” as the church is not a building but a body (the Body of Christ). Quips like that “working at the church” become an accepted truth due to the frequency of their use within modern Christianity and can lead to the redefining of Scriptural words.

In the introduction I attempted to deal with the premise (false premise) that the word ‘church’ is found only in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament). We discovered the LXX (Septuagint) used the Greek to translate the Old Testament (from Hebrew), the same Greek which was used for the New Testament writings. So when we read the Old Testament in our English Bibles words such as multitude, company, congregation and assembly they are translated from the Hebrew word “qahal” which in the LXX is always translated “ekklesia”.

According to tradition, 72 (some say 70) Jewish scholars working out of Alexandria, Egypt, translated the Tanach (The Hebrew Old Testament) into the Greek language (LXX, Septuagint) in the third century BC for the express purpose of allowing Hellenized (8) Jews in the Diaspora to read the Scriptures in the lingua franca (9) of the Mediterranean. The resulting Septuagint was accepted by all Jews and was the most widely read version in existence while Jesus was teaching and ministering on earth. These Jewish scholars used the Greek word ‘ekklesia’ to translate the Hebrew word qahal, which means “congregation, assembly.”

Therefore, in order to fully understand the Greek word ‘ekklesia’ and avoid backwards thinking, we must formulate an understanding of the Hebrew word ‘qahal’ as used in the Hebrew Scriptures.

‘Qahal’ is a derivative of ‘qol’, the word for voice. It refers to the calling of an assembly or to the act (calling out) of assembling. In Scripture it refers to the assembly of the people of Israel. The people of Israel are sometimes referred to as the ‘qehillah,’ which is from the same root. It is interesting to note that there are two Hebrew words that begin with "Q", and their definitions, are: Qadashim n. pl. Kadashim; Holy things; consecrated things; sacrifices & Qehillah n. Assembly; Community; Congregation; the construct form is kehillat, as in Kehillat Israel.

Scripturally we see that the ‘qahal’ / ‘ekklesia’ / ‘church’ is the assembly of all who respond to the call to enter into covenant relationship. As covenant relationships are not solely a New Testament calling, so too, the ‘church’ is not exclusively a New Testament *entity*. I believe this is exactly what Stephan was alluding to when he preached to his fellow Hebrews (Acts 6:9) in his one recorded message found in the Book of Acts (chapter 7). Stephan states, “this is he, (*speaking of Jesus Christ*) that was in “the church in the wilderness.” **Stephan calls or equates Israel with the church in the wilderness.**

Allow me to remind the reader that the Apostolic writers understood that the Greek word ‘ekklesia’ and the Hebrew ‘qahal’ meant the assembly or congregation of God. I believe for Jesus and His Apostles/Disciples there was absolute continuity between the congregation found in the Old Testament and the congregation found in the New Testament.

As I continue to attempt to lay a very sure foundation let us look at some of the explanations offered us from modern day commentators with reference to Stephan’s statement of a “church in the wilderness.”

Albert Barnes Notes on Acts 7:38 church

"The word "church" means literally "the people called out," and is applied with great propriety to the assembly or multitude called out of Egypt, and separated from the world. It is not, however, of necessity our idea of a church, but means the "assembly," or people called out of Egypt and placed under the conduct of Moses."

Scofield Commentary on Acts 7:38 church

“Israel in the land is never called a church. In the wilderness Israel was a true church (Greek, "ecclesia" means "called-out assembly"), but in striking contrast with the New Testament ecclesia” (See *Scofield*) - (Matthew 16:18).

We will discuss Matthew 16:18 in another part of this study. In light of the fact that the word ‘church’ ‘ekklesia’ ‘qahal’ is indeed found in the Tanach (Old Testament) I will list just a few Old Testament Scriptures (there are many others) which called Israel a ‘church’ while residing in the promise land and you decide if the Scofield Commentary is correct or not.

Israel As The Church

“There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation ^[H6951 qahal/ekklesia/church] of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.” (Joshua 8:35)

“Now therefore **in the sight of all Israel the congregation** ^[H6951 qahal/ekklesia/church] of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave *it* for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. (1 Chronicles 28:8)

“And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation ^[H6951 qahal/ekklesia/church].” (2 Chronicles 30:13)

"Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation ^[H6951 qahal/ekklesia/church] of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." (Ezra 10:1)

"And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should **gather themselves together unto Jerusalem**; And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and

himself separated from the **congregation** ^[H6951] *qahal/ekklesia/church*] of those that had been carried away." (Ezra 10:7-8)

"Then all the **congregation** ^[H6951] *qahal/ekklesia/church*] answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do." (Ezra 10:12)

The Etymology of the word ‘church’

The first disciples of the Jesus and indeed those who first received/embraced the promised New Covenant never “went to church” at least certainly not in the sense that we have come to know it and experience it today. The original faith in Messiah was considered a sect of Judaism. They were called “Nazarenes” or “Followers of the Way.” In the Apostle Paul’s trial before Felix, the lawyer for the prosecution makes the following statement, “For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. (Acts 24:5-6 KJV)

May I remind the reader that in the first complete English Bible (the Tyndale Bible 1525) the word church was nowhere to be found in this Bible. Instead of using the word church, which was considered at that time to have pagan roots the first complete English Bible used the word “congregation” instead of church.

For Mr. Tyndale’s scholarly efforts, the church had him burned at the stake as a heretic. As William Tyndale stared death in the eye, he said, “I call God to record, that I have never altered, against the voice of my conscience, one syllable of his Word. Nor would do this day, if all the pleasures, honors, and riches of the earth might be given me.”

There are several streams of thought on the roots of this word ‘church’ and much disagreement. I do not claim to be an expert on the subject nor do I claim to have completed any exhausted research to this point. However, to ignore at least an introduction of the etymology of the word ‘church’ would be to the neglecting of laying a sure foundation.

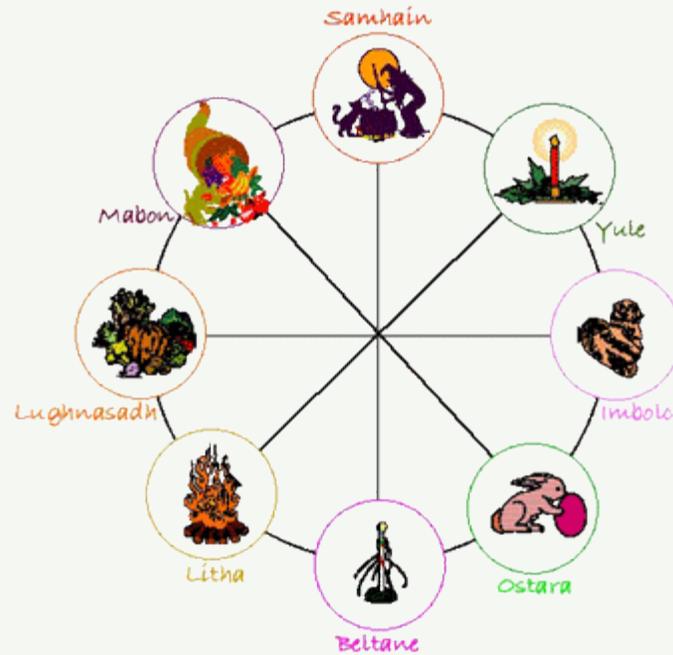
The Kirke of the Anglo-Saxons

The word “church” originally comes from an Old English term “kirke,” which means circle. Long ago, the Anglo-Saxons referred to their pagan places of worship as “kirkes.” (10)

Here are some examples of pagan worship and circles:



Neo-Pagans construct worship circle



One example of the Pagan circle and earth centered spirituality
Please notice the Easter Bunny

The image can be seen clearer at www.emersonuuc.org/community/pagan.htm



Stonehenge

The following represents some very introductory thoughts on the etymology of the word 'church'. I have intentionally minimized my commentary. When the Anglo-

Saxons accepted Christianity, they simply continued to call their worship centers “kirkes,” which eventually evolved into “churches.” The word “kirke” is also the root of the English term “circus.” The “kirke/church” is where the term “three ringed circus” originated.

Merriam - Webster’s Online Dictionary definition of the “kirk” is as follows:

Pronunciation: \ 'kirk, 'kærk\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English (northern dial.), from Old Norse *kirkja*, from Old English *cirice* — more at

CHURCH

Date: 12th century

1 chiefly Scottish : CHURCH

2 capitalized : the national church of Scotland as distinguished from the Church of England or the Episcopal Church in Scotland

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (11th Edition) defines the word ‘church’ as: [ME *chirche*, fr. OE *cirice*, ultimo. Fr. LGk *kyriakon*, fr. Gk, neut. Of *kyriakos* of the lord, fr. *Kyrios* lord, master;] 1. A building for public and esp. Christian worship

Here is the definition of the word ‘church’ as listed in the original **1828 Webster’s Dictionary**:

"Church, n. [Sax. *Circe*, *circ* or *cyrice*; Scots, *kirk*, which retains the Saxon pronunciation; D. *Kerk*; G. *Kirche*; Se. *Kyrchia*; Dan. *Kirke*; Gr. *Kuriokon*, a temple of God, from *kuriakos*, pertaining to a Lord, or to our Lord Jesus Christ, from *kurios*, a Lord; Russ. *Tzerkou*.] .

1 A house consecrated to the worship of God, among christians; the Lord's house. This seems to be the original meaning of the word. The Greek *ekklesia*, from *ekkalew*, to call out or call together, denotes an assembly or collection. But *kuriakos*, *kuriakon*, are from *kurios*, Lord, a term applied by the early christians to Jesus Christ; and the house in which they worshipped was named from that title. So *kuriaka* signifies church goods, *bona ecclesiastica*; *kuriakh*, sc *hmera*, the Lord's day, *dies dominica*.

2. The collective body of christians, or of those who profess to believe in Christ, and acknowledge him to be the Savior of mankind. In this sense, the church is sometimes the Catholic or Universal Church. Johnson Enclyce.

3. A particular number of Christians, united under one form of ecclesiastical government, in one creed, and using the same ritual or ceremonies; as the English church; the Gallican church; the Presbyterian church; the Romish church; the Greek church."

Gary Amirault, in his online article entitled "Circe (Church)—Daughter of the Sun shares some rather provoking incites:

Quote:

Those of you who have been in "church" or have "gone to church" for any length of time have probably heard that the origin of the word "church" is from the Greek word *ekklesia* written in English *ecclesia* which would translate into English as called out, an assembly, or collection. This may be the definition of the word *ecclesia*, but the English word "church" does not come from this Greek word. Webster says the English word "church" comes from the Greek word *kuriakon* meaning "the Lord's" or "the Lord's house or belonging". Sounds plausible, doesn't it? This is what the seminary students are taught when they enter into the halls or walls of Christendom as they study to become "heads of the churches." To most of you, this explanation would probably suffice, but I am a nosy type, and I like to dig. Looking into Young's Concordance, I discovered this word *kuriakon* is not in the Greek text of our Bibles. Strange that the Creator of the Universe would name his body on earth *kuriakon* and then not use the word in His Holy Word.

End Quote

The **Online Etymology Dictionary** on the word 'church':

CIRCE – enchantress of the isle of Aea who transformed into swine those who drank from her cup, late 14c., from L. *Circe*, from Gk. *Kirke*. Related: *Circean*

The Goddess Kirke

Kirke (or Circe) was a goddess *pharmakeia* (witch or sorceress) who lived with her nymph attendants on the mythical island of Aiaia. She was skilled in the magic of metamorphosis, the power of illusion, and the dark art of necromancy. When Odysseus landed on her island she transformed his men into animals, but with the help of the god Hermes, he overcame the goddess and forced her to release his men

from her spell. Kirke's name was derived from the Greek verb *kirkoô* meaning "to secure with rings" or "hoop around"--a reference to her magical powers.

Kirke's island of Aiaia was located in the farthest west, on the boundary between the sea and the river Okeanos which encircled the earth. Her island was contrasted with Aia, the land of the far east, home of Kirke's brother Aeetes.

(11) The Puritans did not use the word "church". They did not use the word "church" because there was no Greek word in the text that could be accurately translated that way. The Puritans used the word "congregation" which is a word which maintains perfect continuity between the Hebrew writings and the Greek New Testament.

The 1535 German Bible published by Luther did not use the word "church" (Kirche – the German equivalent of church) but rather translated ekklesia as "gemeinde" (Community).

The Dutch Staten Vertaling uses gemeente. The standard Danish (menighed), Norwegian (menighet), and Swedish (forsamling) translations use "congregation" for ekklesia.

If the word "church" is not the equivalent of the Greek word "ekklesia" then there is no "church" in the New Testament. And if there is no "church" in the New Testament than how is it possible for there to be a "CHURCH AGE"?

Never Heard That Before

While I was doing some online research in preparation for this article I came across a Question and Answers session which had its focus on the Etymology of the word 'church'. While the initial question is a bit off base "the word 'Church' comes from the GREEK language meaning 'Circle'" the expert response is either amazingly ignorance or unwilling to address the Etymology of the word 'church' which is clearly what the questioner is interested in verifying.

This Q & A session originates from <http://www.en.allexperts.com> and the expert giving the answer is Dean Gade.

Begin Quote

Question

I have been told that the word 'Church' comes from the Greek language meaning 'Circle'. I can find every other definition under the sun for the origin of the word 'Church' on the internet, but not this one. Is this correct? Can it mean this literally in that language, even if a more obscure translation? It has a very important effect upon my Biblical research studies if it can and I would appreciate your expert opinion on this. Many thanks.

Answer

I have never heard of such a meaning for the word "church".

The etymology of the word begins with the Greek word "ekklesia". This word is made up of "ek" or "ex" meaning "out of" or "from"; and the verb "kaleow" meaning "called". Thus the literal meaning in the noun form is "those called out of".

The meaning of the term, "church", as used by the Bible concerning Christians is: "those who have been called out of the 'world' and into "God's kingdom through the good news of Jesus Christ as their savior and lord".

The verb form of "kaleow" (called) is used quite often in the NT speaking about God's calling various disciples. In I Cor. alone, it used a dozen times. And it is also commonly used to designate a name as in "His name shall be CALLED...."

The Greek word for "circle" used in the Bible is "kooklow" and can have the meaning of "those who are AROUND another person".

End Quote

Again, you make the call!

Ignorance is no excuse for accepting 1500 years of inherited tradition!

For the Record

I have intentionally tried not to draw conclusions but rather have attempted to introduce the etymology of the word 'church'. I have my own conclusions (which

remain open to correction and further revelation). However, I am not attempting to thrust my conclusions upon the reader but rather attempting to share information.

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13 KJV)

I am not anti-church. I am for the Body of Messiah. I am not interested in rebellion. However, I am prayerfully interested in revelation.

Some of the most challenging words ever spoken by Jesus Christ are found in Matthew 5:19. I am guilty of one thing and that is having a desire to be great in the Kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall **do and teach** *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 KJV)

The Continuity Of The Scriptures

The definition of continuity is an uninterrupted connection, succession, or union. An uninterrupted duration or continuation especially without essential change. I would like to suggest to you that the words ‘assembly or congregation’ offer us a more accurate definition of the words ‘qahal and ekklesia’ and offer us the greatest continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I would like to remind the reader that the Greek word from which we get our English word church is the word “ekklesia” (*which is also where we get the English word ecclesiastical*). Ekklesia literally means “a calling out” especially as it refers to a congregation or assembly. In Strong’s Concordance the Greek word ekklesia (G1577) comes from the two Greek words, “ek” (G1537) which means “out of” and the word “kaleo” (G2564) which means “to call”. The word “ekklesia” is also found translated as the word “assembly” in the King James Version (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Interestingly in the first complete English Bible (the Tyndale Bible 1924) the word church was not to be found anywhere. Instead of

using the word church, which has been thought to have pagan roots, (we will discuss that at a later time) the first complete English Bible used the word “congregation” instead of church.

I would also like to remind you that the Old Testament Hebrew equivalent of the New Testament Greek word *ekklesia* is ‘Qahal’. Qahal is a derivative of ‘qol’, the word for voice. It refers to the calling of an assembly or to the act (calling out) of assembling. In Scripture it refers to the assembly of the people of Israel.

The people of Israel are sometimes referred to as the ‘qehillah,’ which is from the same root. It is interesting to note that there are two Hebrew words that begin with "Q" , and their definitions, are: Qadashim n. pl. Kadashim; Holy things; consecrated things; sacrifices & Qehillah n. Assembly; Community; Congregation; the construct form is kehillat, as in Kehillat Israel.

Scripturally we see that the ‘qahal’ / ‘ekklesia’ / ‘church’ is the assembly of all who respond to the call to enter into covenant relationship. As covenant relationships are not solely a New Testament calling, so too, the ‘church’ is not exclusively a New Testament *entity*.

However one views it (qahal or *ekklesia*) the most consistent definition, the one which offers the greater continuity is that of assembly or congregation.

For example let us look at Matthew Chapter 18:

Matthew 18:15-17 KJV “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (16) But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. (17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell *it* unto the church**: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

Now if you are of the opinion that the ‘church’ was birthed on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 you might have a problem with this passage.

In this passage Jesus lays out a process for dealing with the trespass of a brother. First, go to him and attempt to deal with the problem face to face. Secondly, if that is unsuccessful go again to the brother and take one or two witnesses with you. And lastly, if none of these attempts are effective take the matter to the church.

The church?

If the ‘church’ was born on Pentecost than to whom was Jesus referring to as the church here?

Here in Matthew 18:17 is a perfect example where the word ‘assembly or congregation’ would be a more consistent and accurate word for the translators to use here.

Hebrews Chapter 2 offers us other clear example where the words ‘assembly or congregation’ would offer a great continuity than the word church.

Hebrews 2:12 KJV “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church (*ekklesia*) will I sing praise unto thee.”

The New American Standard version translates Hebrews 2:12 this way, “I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation (*ekklesia*) I will sing Thy praise.”

Hebrews 2:12 is a direct quote from Psalm 22:22 which says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation (*qahal*) will I praise thee.

Again, another example where the word ‘assembly or congregation’ would offer us an uninterrupted connection without essential change.

The question is why did the translators chose the word ‘church’? I could only speculate. Perhaps it is because at that time the word ‘church’ (*kirke*) was a commonly accepted word associated with places of worship.

I have been studying Messianic Prophecies lately and I have yet to find a Messianic prophecy which states or even alludes to the fact that when Messiah comes He would establish a new never before existed ‘church’.

Below is a list of Messianic Prophecies which Jesus fulfilled.

Consider these Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament fulfillment by Christ:

- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-7)

- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-23) as a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18; Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16), of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23, 33; Hebrews 7:14), and of the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 1:1)
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- Herod killing the infants (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16-18)
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- Taken to Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:14-15)
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- Heralded by the messenger of the Lord (John the Baptist) (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:1-3)
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- Anointed by the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2; Matthew 3:16-17)
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- Preached good news (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:14-21)
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- Performed miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 9:35)
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- Cleansed the Temple (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 21:12-13)
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- Ministered in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-16)
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- Entered Jerusalem as a king on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:4-9)
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- First presented Himself as King 173,880 days from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25; Matthew 21:4-11)
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- Rejected by Jews (Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:7)
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- Died a humiliating death (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53) involving: rejection (Isaiah 53:3; John 1:10-11; 7:5,48), betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Luke 22:3-4; John 13:18), sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:14-15), silence before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-14), being mocked (Psalm 22: 7-8; Matthew 27:31), beaten (Isaiah 52:14; Matthew 27:26), spit upon (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 27:30), piercing His hands and feet (Psalm 22:16; Matthew 27:31), being crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38), praying for His persecutors (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34), piercing His side

- (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34), given gall and vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21, Matthew 27:34, Luke 23:36), no broken bones (Psalm 34:20; John 19:32-36),
- buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60), casting lots for His garments (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).
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- Rose from the dead! (Psalm 16:10; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:31)
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- Ascended into Heaven (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9)
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- Sat down at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3)

- (1) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H2318&t=KJV>
- (2) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G1577&t=KJV>
- (3) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G1537&t=KJV>
- (4) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G2564&t=KJV>
- (5) <http://www.tyndale-bible.com/tyndale-bible-history.html>
- (6) <http://www.septuagint.net/>
- (7) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H6951&t=KJV>
- (8) <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?letter=H&artid=567>
- (9) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lingua_franca
- (10) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirk>
- (11) Copernicus and the Jews by Daniel Gruber (A Good Church is hard to find)