

Question: "What is the definition of *ekklesia*?"

Answer: Understanding the definition of *ekklesia* (and its alternate spelling *ecclesia*) is an important component of understanding the church. *Ekklesia* is a Greek word defined as "a called-out assembly or congregation." *Ekklesia* is commonly translated as "church" in the New Testament. For example, [Acts 11:26](#) says that "Barnabas and Saul met with the church [*ekklesia*]" in Antioch. And in [1 Corinthians 15:9](#) Paul says that he had persecuted the church [*ekklesia*] of God." The "called-out assembly," then, is a congregation of believers whom God has called out of the world and "into His wonderful light" ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). The Greek *ekklesia* is the basis for our English words *ecclesiastical* ("pertaining to the church") and *ecclesiology* ("the study of doctrine concerning the church").

The word in the New Testament was also used to refer to any assembly of people. In his address to the Sanhedrin, Stephen calls the people of Israel "the assembly [*ekklesia*] in the wilderness" ([Acts 7:38](#)). And in [Acts 19:39](#), *ekklesia* refers to a convening of citizens to discuss legal matters. However, in most contexts, the word *ekklesia* is used to refer to the people who comprise the New Testament church.

It is important that the church today understand the definition of *ekklesia*. The church needs to see itself as being "called out" by God. If the church wants to make a difference in the world, it must be different from the world. Salt is different from the food it flavors. God has called the church to be separate from sin ([1 Peter 1:16](#)), to embrace fellowship with other believers ([Acts 2:42](#)), and to be a light to the world ([Matthew 5:14](#)). God has graciously called us unto Himself: "Come out from them and be separate," says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" ([2 Corinthians 6:17](#)).

Question: "What is the importance or value of a church building?"

Answer: The Bible presents the church as an entity made up of redeemed followers of Christ from every nation and era ([Matthew 16:18](#); [Hebrews 12:23](#)). When the Bible speaks of a "church," it means believers in Christ ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#); [Romans 12:5](#)). However, when we speak of a "church," we are often referring to the building in which a local group of Christians meets. The first Christians did not have a designated building for their meetings. They met in homes ([Colossians 4:15](#); [Philemon 1:2](#)). Today, a church building is considered an important part of Christian worship.

[Acts 2:46](#) describes a large gathering of Christians meeting in the outer courts of the temple. Scholars believe that, in the first two centuries throughout the [Roman Empire](#), as Christianity spread rapidly, Christians would gather in public places, attracting unbelievers and those with questions. It is interesting to note that, even when there may have been several places available for meetings, all the Christians in one city met together in one place. There were no denominations or factions meeting independently.

The earliest designated church building known to historians was located on the Euphrates River in Roman Syria. It was a large house, remodeled somewhere around AD 240 to create a large common area and secondary room for the baptistry. As Christianity spread into other nations, church buildings became commonplace. By the 11th century, grand cathedrals dotted European cities with smaller parish churches sprouting up in towns and villages.

Most homes today are not large enough to host the number of Christians who wish to worship together. Christianity has become the largest religion in the world, and in many locations, outdoor meetings such as [Acts 2](#) describes are not possible. Designated church buildings are important in that they provide a consistent meeting place for Christians in an area. They provide a neutral gathering place, an equalizer for the wide variety of lifestyles that make up the Body of Christ. Homes large enough to accommodate several hundred worshippers would have to be those of the ultra-wealthy. The display of such personal wealth would be a distraction from the purpose of the meeting and an invisible divider between the haves and the have-nots.

Many church buildings are valuable in that they are multi-purpose. Some house Christian schools during the week. Some offer meals, shelter, or other daily provisions for struggling members of the community. A church building is often the hub of social life in a small town, being the site of dinners, meetings, and youth activities. A church building is usually viewed as a safe place, a refuge for travelers or those in need. Regardless of denomination, most churches represent a link to God for those outside the faith and are often a drawing card for people in crisis.

Some church buildings lose their importance when they become "whitewashed tombs" such as Jesus spoke of in [Matthew 23:27](#). They are opulent, beautiful, imposing—and dead. The grandeur of a building has no connection to the faith of its people. God can meet with His people anywhere. A building is merely a shelter for their bodies, not a factor in their worship. In fact, religion loves its ostentatious structures that often hide its empty theology.

A church building can be important, but whether a church uses a building, a tent, or a grand stadium, it should teach biblical doctrine, proclaim the gospel of salvation, and glorify Christ.

Recommended Resource: [The Master's Plan for the Church by John MacArthur](#)