

# The Church?

by John David Clark, Sr.



*“And I say also unto you, that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my ekklesia, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.”*  
(Matt.16:18)

## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD “CHURCH”?

The word “church” comes from the Greek word *kuriakon*, which is a word that was never used by Jesus or any of his apostles. Literally, *kuriakon* means “a lord’s house”. It refers to a building made by human hands and dedicated to worship of a deity. In ancient times, there were many “churches” dedicated to “lords”, such as Athena, Isis, Jove, Mithras, and others. And since the word “church” refers to any building used for worship, Islamic mosques qualify to be called “churches”, temples where Jews or Buddhists worship are also “churches”, and, of course, buildings used by Christians for their worship also qualify as “churches”.

At an early stage of the development of the religion of Christianity, someone replaced Jesus’ word for God’s called-out people (*ekklesia*) with the ancient Greek word for a building dedicated to the gods (*kuriakon*). The error became popular, and though Jesus and his apostles never used the word “church”, Christianity commanded military power sufficient to enforce its changes on everyone. Thus, the use of “church” became standard. Dissenting voices were brutally silenced. In 1604, when King James ordered that a new translation of the Bible be made, he commanded his translators to use the word “church”, in spite of some who wanted to translate *ekklesia* correctly. But the powerful churchmen who supported King James would have been incensed if he had allowed the translators to translate *ekklesia* correctly. If the king had done that, the word “church” would never have appeared in the New Testament of the King James Bible at all, and churchmen would have been exposed as the frauds they were, and are.

William Tyndall was murdered by churchmen because he translated the Bible into the English language. Part of the reason he was so hated by Christian leaders was that, in his translation, he refused to use the word “church”. Though the Greek word *ekklesia* is found in the New Testament well over one hundred times, Tyndall never translated it as “church”. He knew that “church” is not what *ekklesia* means. “Church” is a heathen term that has nothing to do with the grace of God; it was imposed on the Scriptures by Christians.

## EKKLESIA

“Ekklesia”, the word used in the New Testament for the community of believers, means “called-out ones”, “congregation”, or “assembly”. It refers to the people who once were scattered but whom God has called out of darkness into light. It perfectly describes the people of the Lord, those called by God out of every culture and race into

the kingdom of His dear Son, Jesus. God foretold of these called-out people when He spoke through Hosea: *“I will call them my people, who were not my people . . . and it shall come to pass, in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people’, there shall they be called the children of the living God.”*

On earth, God dwells only in the hearts of His *ekklesia*. In fact, the Almighty scoffed at the idea that men could build Him an earthly building. He demanded, *“The heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you will build for me?”* (Isa. 66:1). This is why Jesus and his servants never used the word “church” when speaking of God’s people.

It was after confessing this simple, precious truth that the young Stephen was stoned to death by the enraged elders of Israel. And it still provokes proud men to tell them that churches are not holy and that “church” has nothing to do with Jesus. To join any church on earth is to become partners with a lie. There are no holy buildings anywhere on this planet. “Churches” have always been mere buildings made by humans, and God dwells in none of them. *“The Most High”,* said Stephen before being dragged out of the city to his death, *“does not dwell in temples made by hands.”*

## THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Anyone who has received God’s Spirit has become the dwelling place of God. *“Do you not know”,* asked Paul, *“that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you?”* (1Cor. 6:19). When we receive the Spirit, both the Father and the Son enter into our hearts (Jn. 14:23). *“By this,”* wrote John, *“we know that He dwells in us, by the Spirit that He has given to us”* (1Jn. 3:24).

Yes, there are holy places on this earth, but those places are people, the people whose bodies have been sanctified by the power of God’s Spirit. United in love and faith, the saints are shaped by Jesus into a living temple. Their bodies become

the place, the only place on earth, where acceptable worship is offered to the Creator. From them, He accepts sacrifices of praise, offerings of love, and oblations of humility. Peter wrote, “*You, as living stones, are made into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” (1Pet. 2:5).

Don’t you want to be a part of this? You can be. All that God requires is obedient faith in Jesus. You, too, can be a holy place on earth where God dwells by His Spirit.

### WHAT IS THE RIGHT NAME FOR GOD’S PEOPLE?

The assembly of God’s saints has no name. It is just that, the assembly of saints. We do find that the New Testament writers deemed it helpful at times when speaking of the congregation of the Lord to use descriptive titles such as Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22), God’s building (1Cor. 3:9), the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the assembly of God (Acts 20:28), the body of Christ (1Cor. 10:16), and many others. But though there be different titles for it, there is but one body of believers that God acknowledges (Eph. 4:4).

Searching for a title for God’s family should consume little of our energy, however, compared to that spent in making certain that God dwells in us, for only those in whom God lives have hope of being saved in the end.

### BAPTISM: BIRTH INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD

Moved by the Spirit of prophecy, the Psalmist declared, “*Of Zion [God’s dwelling place] it shall be said, ‘This man was born in her.’ And the highest Himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that ‘This man was born there’*” (Ps. 87:5, 6). This is God’s way. One must be born into the household of God because it is a family; not an organization. In the Old Testament, it was by a natural birth that one

became a member of God’s family; in this New Covenant, it is by a spiritual birth. This is why Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*Ye must be born again*” (Jn. 3:3-7). In the following three verses, Paul reveals the mystery concerning God’s chosen way for people to be born again and, thus, to become members of His family:

**1Corinthians 12:13:** “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*”

**Galatians 3:27:** “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*”

**Romans 6:3:** “*Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*”

These three Scriptures state clearly that one becomes a member of God’s family by baptism. But the question is, “Which baptism?” Is it a baptism with water or is it Jesus’ baptism with the Spirit? The question is conclusively answered in the verse from 1Corinthians: “*By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*”

Regardless of how good a person appears to be, or how lofty his title, if he has not received Jesus’ baptism, he has not been born again, and he is not yet in God’s family. As Paul wrote, “*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” The earthly family of God is comprised only of Spirit-baptized people; no one else is a child of God, though many may yet enter in.

### NOT ALL OF GOD’S FAMILY WILL BE SAVED!

Some who enter into God’s family prove afterwards to be unfaithful to Christ. Therefore, the body of Christ, as a whole, is not perfect. Nor was it perfect in the days of the apostles. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, for example, were anything but exemplary children of God. Yes, from its beginning, the family of God has contained both

wise and foolish saints, but Jesus promised to purge God’s family of unworthy members before his return (Mt. 13:36-43). Child of God, watch and pray. God is no respecter of persons.

In his parable of The Sower, Jesus spoke of the danger of becoming unfruitful because of “cares of this world” and “the deceitfulness of riches”. How many we see in this condition! He also spoke of the obedient children of God, saying that they would understand and would bring forth fruit. Thank God for these precious, faithful saints, though they be few in number!

Take heed to your soul, my friend. We are still in the age when the family of God contains both the good and the bad. But, thanks be to God, the end is drawing near.

My brother, my sister, you who have been born of the Spirit of God, is your garment still spotless? Are you yet among those who “have not defiled their garments”? Or is your robe like the robes of those believers that James described as “*motheaten?*” Make your answer to God and write us if this message has been a blessing to you.

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