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# The Summation of All Things in Christ

## Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

### LESSON I : PRE-INTRODUCTION: DEFINING THE CHURCH

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#### *Defining the Issue / Terminology*

A common teaching amongst Protestant and many Baptist churches today is what is termed the “universal invisible church” and Ephesians is one of the main texts used to support their understanding of that teaching. I reject that interpretation and that is the reason for wanting to teach the book of Ephesians “with a local church emphasis.” Prior to beginning therefore it may be beneficial to look at what I mean when I speak of the “church” during these lessons and why. Let’s start with the three most general divisions of teachings and define each:

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<i>universal visible</i>	Definition: the church is not limited to any given locality but is world-wide ( <i>universal</i> ) and that it is likewise a physical, material church ( <i>visible</i> ). The only representation of that definition is the Catholic church.
<i>universal invisible</i>	Definition: the church is not limited to any given locality but is world-wide ( <i>universal</i> ) and in contrast to the Catholic teaching, this body is a spiritual church ( <i>invisible</i> ). The particulars of this belief differs between groups: “Some believe it includes all the elect, living, dead and unborn; others limit it to the believers of this church age; still others to those only who are living at a particular time in this age. Some identify it with the kingdom of God, the family of God, or the ‘body of Christ,’ whatever they conceive this body to be, and so on, ad infinitum.” [Kazee, <i>Church</i> ] Personally I would refer to this truth as the “ <i>family of God</i> ” and not call it the “ <i>universal-invisible church</i> .”
<i>local visible</i>	Definition: the church is a physical, material church ( <i>visible</i> ) but is limited to a given locality ( <i>local</i> ). This is accepted in part by all Christian groups but to some Baptists it is the <u>only</u> scriptural definition of the NT church. <i>I would be counted with those Baptists who only believe in a local-visible definition of the church.</i>

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#### *Common definitions for “church”*

Ecclesia, the Greek word used in the NT commonly translated “church” is defined as ***an assembly of people called together for a defined purpose***. Compare that with the following common definitions for our word “church”:

- **a body or organization of religious believers**, a congregation (this definition is the most accurate scripturally)
- **a building** for public and especially Christian worship
- **in a historical sense**, referring to no particular church or denomination but has the connotation of all the church activity in history, the “*church age*”
- **the clergy or officialdom** of a religious body
- **a public divine worship**, “He goes to church every Sunday”, “the church service”
- **the clerical profession**, “He considered the church as a possible career.”
- **of or relating to a church**, “church government”
- **all of one denomination**, “the Baptist church”, “the Brethren church”, “the Catholic church”
- **all professing Christians**, alive or dead, the “universal-invisible church”
- **an established church**; i.e. a church recognized by law as the official church of a nation or state and supported by civil authority; e.g. the Church of England in England, the Lutheran church in Germany

#### *What is the origin of our English word “church”?*

Obviously most of the above definitions have little to do with the scriptural definition. That being so, how is it “church” is so commonly used today?

Though not without debate, it is generally accepted the word “church” originated from the Greek word κυριακός (kuriakos), an adjective meaning “*pertaining to the Lord, the Lord’s*.” The word is actually used twice in our Bibles: “*When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat ...*” (1 Cor 11:20) and “*On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ...*” (Rev 1:10).

This word is derived from the Greek word κύριος (kurios) meaning “*Lord, master*,” frequently used of Christ. As early as the third century the word began being used to refer to the building where Christians worshiped, the people calling it “*the Lord’s*”

\_\_\_\_\_” with the word “house” understood. From thence over the centuries it was passed into various European languages as Christianity spread throughout Europe: in English it is *church*, in Anglo-Saxon or Old English *cirice*, in Czechoslovakian *cirkev*, in Bulgarian *cerkova*, in German *kirche*, in Danish *kyrke*, in Swedish *kyrka*, in Finnish *kirkko*, in Scottish *kirk*, in Old Scandinavian *kyrka*, and in Old Gothic *kyreika*.

## ***Ecclesia was a Common Word***

When Christ spoke “*Upon this rock I will build My ecclesia*” He was using a term familiar to each disciple. “***The New Testament writers neither coined this word nor employed it in an unusual sense.*** The apostles and early Christians were more familiar with the Septuagint than with the Hebrew Version. From it they generally quoted. They wrote in Greek to a Greek-speaking world, and used Greek words as a Greek-speaking people would understand them.... [It is] fiction that *Ecclesia* was used in any new, special sense. ***The object of Christ’s ecclesia, and terms of membership in it, were indeed different from those of the classic or Septuagint ecclesia. But the word itself retains its ordinary meaning.*** In determining this meaning we look to the common, literal usage. If occasionally we find it used in a general or figurative way, these few instances must be construed in harmony with the common, literal signification.” [Carroll, *Ecclesia*] “Thus, although ἐκκλησία [ecclesia] is from the very first a secular and worldly expression, it expresses the supreme claim of the Christian community in face of the world.” [Kittel, *Dictionary*]

## ***How was Ecclesia used in Classical Greek?***

The word ecclesia came from the combining of two Greek words ἐκ (ek = out of or from) and καλέω (kaleō = to call or summon). The typical Protestant definition therefore states “the church are those ‘called out’ from the world, meaning every Christian.” ***This over-generality does great injustice to the word ecclesia!***

In its most basic sense, ecclesia may be defined as follows: “***Originally an assembly of citizens, regularly summoned.***” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] The ancient Greek nation was composed of a number of small city-states embracing usually but a few thousand inhabitants. It was governed by the qualified citizens; i.e. they were autonomous and democratic. Not all the inhabitants however possessed the rights of citizenship (in some cases scarcely half) so the matter of qualification was quite important. This body of citizens *called-out* to assemble and discuss civic affairs was a Greek *ecclesia* (a NT example of that may be found in Acts 19). Therefore when the Lord Jesus used this word, He used it in the sense commonly understood by those with whom He was talking. In essence what Jesus said was this: “*The Greek Gentiles have their assemblies which regularly meet to discuss things of a secular nature. I too will start and build My own ecclesia, an assembly of believers which will meet on a regular basis, not to discuss secular matters nor for social purposes but to honor and glorify My name. This assembly will be built using you apostles as the foundation (it is with you I will begin) and hell itself will not destroy this program — when I return, there will still be those assemblies meeting for My name’s sake.*” **Thus during His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ started a work which continues to this day.**

Further definitions:

- H. E. Dana, Greek scholar, co-author of an advance Greek grammar and professor of NT Interpretation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote this concerning the Greek background of ecclesia: “***It was commonly used in reference to bodies of qualified representatives ‘called out’ for legislative purposes.... When this governing body of those who held the qualifications of citizenship assembled for deliberative purposes they were known as an ecclesia. In its bearing upon the New Testament idea of the church the important significance of the classical usage is that the term referred to a body of persons having definite qualifications, assembled to carry out certain organized aims on democratic principles. To be more specific, there were in the classical usage of this term four elements pertinent to its New Testament meaning: (1) the assembly was local; (2) it was autonomous; (3) it presupposed definite qualifications; (4) it was conducted on democratic principles.***” [Dana, *Ecclesia*]
- Louw-Nida’s Lexicon: “***a congregation of Christians, implying interacting membership ... Though some persons have tried to see in the term ἐκκλησία [ecclesia] a more or less literal meaning of ‘called-out ones,’ this type of etymologizing is not warranted either by the meaning of ἐκκλησία [ecclesia] in NT times or even by its earlier usage. The term ἐκκλησία [ecclesia] was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership.***” [Louw-Nida *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*]
- Thayer’s Greek lexicon: “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly” [J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*]
- Liddell and Scott: “an assembly of citizens regularly summoned; the legislative assembly” [R. Scott and H. G. Liddell, *A Greek-English Lexicon*]
- Trench’s Synonyms: “the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the rights of citizenship, for the transaction of public affairs” [R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*; q.v. Overbey, *Ecclesia*]
- Seyffert’s Dictionary: “The assembly of the people, which in Greek cities had the power of final decision in public affairs.” [Oskar Seyffert, *A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*; q.v. Overbey, *Ecclesia*]
- Barclay-Neuman’s Dictionary: “church, congregation; assembly, gathering (of religious, political, or unofficial

Acts 19:30-41 ~ This is the only NT secular usage of ecclesia; the word is used 3x in this portion of scripture:

Tyndale 1534 — When Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. Certain also of the chief of Asia which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not press into the common hall. Some cried one thing and some another, and the **congregation** was all out of quiet, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. Some of the company drew forth Alexander, the Jews thrusting him forwards. Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have given the people an answer. When they knew he was a Jew, there arose a shout almost for the space of two hours, of all men crying, great is Diana of the Ephesians. When the town clerk had ceased the people, he said: ye men of Ephesus, what man is it that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which came from heaven. Seeing then that no man saith here against, ye out to be content, and to do nothing rashly: **For he have brought hither these men which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet despisers of your goddess.** Wherefore if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him, have any saying to any man, the law is open, and there are rulers, let them accuse one another. If ye go about any other thing, it may be determined in a lawful **congregation**. For we are in jeopardy to be accused of this day’s business: forasmuch as there is no cause whereby we may give a reckoning of this concourse of people. And when he had thus spoken, he let the **congregation** depart.

Young’s 1863 — And on Paul’s purposing to enter in unto the populace, the disciples were not suffering him, and certain also of the chief men of Asia, being his friends, having sent unto him, were entreating him not to venture himself into the theatre. Some indeed, therefore, were calling out one thing, and some another, for the **assembly** was confused, and the greater part did not know for what they were come together; and out of the multitude they put forward Alexander — the Jews thrusting him forward — and Alexander having beckoned with the hand, wished to make defence to the populace, and having known that he is a Jew, one voice came out of all, for about two hours, crying, ‘Great [is] the Artemis of the Ephesians!’ And the public clerk having quieted the multitude, saith, ‘Men, Ephesians, why, who is the man that doth not know that the city of the Ephesians is a devotee of the great goddess Artemis, and of that which fell down from Zeus? these things, then, not being to be gainsaid, it is necessary for you to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. **‘For ye brought these men, who are neither temple-robbers nor speaking evil of your goddess;** if indeed, therefore, Demetrius and the artificers with him with any one have a matter, court [days] are held, and there are proconsuls; let them accuse one another. And if ye seek after anything concerning other matters, in the legal **assembly** it shall be determined; for we are also in peril of being accused of insurrection in regard to this day, there being no occasion by which we shall be able to give an account of this concourse;’ and these things having said, he dismissed the **assembly**.

A note of great interest on Tyndale’s translation: in v37 “*For ye have brought hither these men which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet despisers of your goddess.*” (Acts 19:37) While altogether not an accurate translation (“*robbers of temples*” is more accurate), it does show the word “*church*” was in common use when Tyndale translated his NT yet he chose to translate ecclesia “*congregation*”.

“These three occurrences of the term *ecclesia*, in which it is not possible to translate it ‘church,’ are sufficient to call our attention to the fact that **the word still had for early Christians its common significance**, and was not invariably used in its restricted sense as the designation of a body of believers.” [Dana, *Ecclesia*]

### **The progression from the NT’s Greek word “ecclesia” to “church”**

**NO INITIAL CONTROVERSY** — Although there were immediate departures from some of the particulars of church life, **evidently the inherent local nature of the ecclesia was not questioned or disputed.** “The works of the Fathers of the first two centuries that have come down to us contain no distinct treatise on the church. The statements on the subject scattered through their writings, though by no means scanty, are for the most part of a purely practical or even devotional character. Rarely do the definitions of the Church found in the pages of Ignatius or Irenaeus, Tertullian or Origen, make any approach to scientific precision.” [J. J. McElhinney, *The Doctrine of the Church*; q.v. Kazee, *Church*]

**THE PAGAN UNDERSTANDING** — As early as 255 AD the Germanic tribes of the Goths were exposed to Christianity by invading the Greek Christian territory to rob these Christian assemblies. As mentioned above, it was not unusual to refer to these places of worship as *kuriakon* or “the Lord’s house”. **“It is easy to understand how the pagan German seized on the name of the building he robbed rather than on the name of the fellowship he did not appreciate. Moreover, the marauders were much more likely to have picked up a word from the common speech like *kuriakon*, than a word with high ecclesiastical associations like *ecclesia*.”** [John Oman, in *Hastings’ Ency. of Religion and Ethics*; q.v. Dana, *Ecclesia*]

Another factor was the geographical location of the Goths, on the north bank of the Danube and in close proximity to Greek Christianity. It would be quite natural to be impressed with the outward tangible physical expression of Christianity (i.e. the buildings where the believers met) than to understand the truly important thing was the assembly inside, the ecclesia. **To the early Goths, *kuriakon* undoubtedly became the significant verbal designation of the Christian religion. “Thus the church building became the embodiment and essential expression of the religion which they accepted. By an easy and natural modification the term for the building came to be applied to the religious institution which it represented; the institution itself was ‘the Church’; the building its tangible expression.”** [Dana, *Ecclesia*]

**THE GROWTH OF “SACERDOTAL” WORDS** — As the Christian religion grew in Europe (although not necessarily true Christianity itself), the division between “*theologians*” and “*laymen*” grew within Catholicism and words as *ecclesia* became

removed from the common language. “We should be safe in saying that prior to the tenth century the word became entirely sacerdotal and hierarchal in its significance. The modern English-speaking world has in a large measure rejected the associations of priestcraft and centralization, but it still clings to the idea of ecclesiastical organization.” [Dana, *Ecclesia*] This remained true throughout the Dark Ages until the Reformation.

**THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSLATIONS** — For the first centuries (in Europe and the Middle East at least) the Greek NT was the prevalent version. Of course the word used for “church” would have *ecclesia*, the original Greek word being a common term known throughout the Greek-speaking world. “**Ekklesia was a Greek word that would have been understood by all who used this universal language in the days of the apostles as meaning a visible assembly even after it had acquired a Christian significance.** Christianity did not change the meaning of the word but adopted it as a fit description of this divine institution.” [Kazee, *Church*]

In the European culture, Latin became the dominant language and the word of God was translated into Latin. Due to the multiplicity of Latin translations, most of very poor quality, **Jerome** was commissioned in 382 AD to make an authoritative Latin translation. This work became known as the **Latin Vulgate** and was the prevalent translation throughout Europe for the next millennium, to such an extent that its influence is still evident in our modern English versions of the Bible. The Latin words used by Jerome for “church” is *ecclesiam, ecclesiae*, or some other form, obviously the Latin equivalent for the Greek word itself.

The Reformation brought new English translations, with **Tyndale** (1525) accurately translating the word *ecclesia* by “congregation.” Later versions as the **Coverdale** (1535) and **Cranmer’s Bible** (the “Great Bible,” 1539) did the same. But beginning with the **Genevan translation of 1560** *ecclesia* was translated “church.” Upon the royal command of King James, the translators of our **Authorized Version** followed their example:

*“Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words and betake them to other, as when they put washing for baptism, and congregation instead of church; as also on the other side we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists, in their azimes, tunic, rational, holocausts, praepuce, pasche, and a number of such like, whereof their late translation is full--and that of purpose to darken the sense, that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof, it may be kept from being understood. But we desire that the Scripture may speak like itself, as in the language of Canaan, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar.”* [from the Preface to the King James 1611 Version]

This is followed almost universally in modern versions as the RSV, ASV and NIV. Exceptions to this would be the **Young’s Literal Translation** and Kenneth Wuest’s **Expanded Translation of the NT**, although even Wuest uses the word church at his discretion.

Hort states the following concerning the history behind “church”: “**‘Congregation’ was the only rendering of *ekklesia* in the English New Testament as it stood throughout Henry VIII’s reign, the substitution of ‘church’ being due to the Genevan revisers;** and it held its ground in the Bishops’ Bible in no less primary a passage than Matt 16:18 till the Jacobean revision of 1611, which we call the Authorized Version.” [Hort, *Ecclesia*] Hort as much as possible avoided using the word “church” or even “congregation” in his lectures (later published). *Note: Hort was not totally accurate in his statement about “church” not being used before the Geneva translation, but he may not have had access to Wycliffe’s 1380 NT in which “church” is used in Matt 16:18; 18:17.*

### **The word “church” is a substitution, not a translation**

*Any translator not translating *ecclesia* as assembly, congregation or the like is allowing their theology to bias their translating. The fact they use the word “church” is therefore not a recognition of the actual intention of the word *ecclesia*, rather it should be regarded as a commentary. *Ecclesia* may be correctly translated assembly (or congregation) in all instances and the passage will make perfect sense.* I am not alone with that conviction: “It is this word [‘church’] with these connotations which is employed to translate *ecclesia*. **It is clear how utterly inadequate — not to say inaccurate — it is.**” [Dana, *Ecclesia*] “Now our English word ‘church’ as a rendering of *ecclesia* is doubly unfortunate, for while it fails both to represent and interpret the Greek original, its historical and conventional usage carries us even farther away from both the Hellenic and Hebrew minds and associations.” [A. M. Fairborn, *Studies in Religion and Theology*; q.v. Dana, *Ecclesia*]

Hort, an accepted Greek scholar and definitely not one biased by Baptist influences, wrote this concerning the danger of not translating the term properly: “The reason why I have chosen the term *ecclesia* is simply to avoid ambiguity. **The English term church, now the most familiar representative of *ecclesia* to most of us, carries with it associations derived from the institutions and doctrines of later times, and thus cannot at present without a constant mental effort be made to convey the full and exact force which originally belonged to *ecclesia*....** ‘*Ecclesia*’ is the only perfectly colorless word within our reach, carrying us back to the beginnings of Christian history, and enabling us in some degree to get behind words and names to the simple facts which they originally denoted.” [Hort, *Ecclesia*]

Overbey agrees: “**The word church should not be in our English versions today to represent *ecclesia*. Its appearance in the New Testament, we believe, has obscured the true meaning.... In our study of the word *ekklesia* in the New Testament it is clear that we should be careful to divorce the word church from it lest we read into *ekklesia* the meanings of the word church.**” [Overbey, *Ecclesia*]

## What Is Our Church's Position?

The official church position may be found in our doctrinal statement: “We believe that a Church of Jesus Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word; that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus; that it is an independent, sovereign, local body, possessing the absolute right of self-government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations, secular or sacred, that Christ Jesus is its only head; that it is scriptural for true churches to fellowship together in contending for the faith and furtherance of the gospel and that each church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its fellowship.” [from the Doctrinal Statement of Emmanuel Baptist Church as found on the official church website, [www.ebckey.org](http://www.ebckey.org); May 20, 2013]

## What Does that Mean to Us?

**THE ECCLESIA IS AN ASSEMBLY** — In every instance the word *ecclesia* is used in the NT, the word is used in one of three manners:

- as **a particular local assembly** within the strict adherence of the word’s definition, almost always of the *ecclesia* began by Christ for His NT work; once to describe the assembly of the Jews as they wandered in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) and in one passage to describe a Greek “city-hall” assembly (Acts 19:32,39,41)
- as **a class or an institution**, used generically; in this instance it is used in the singular but is the same as saying “all *ecclesias*”
- as **a future assembly of all the redeemed in heaven**, the word *ecclesia* still retaining its original meaning because at that time the redeemed will actually be a gathered assembly (following B. H. Carroll’s “church in prospect”)

**PRACTICALLY SPEAKING ...** — In practical matters, I do not see much difference between myself and a believer who is a strong “local-church man” but also believes in the “universal invisible church” (the important portion of that statement is “a believer who is a strong ‘local-church man’ ”). I have one pastor friend who describes himself as a “**BIG L and little u**” church-man — I personally have no problem with that viewpoint. As we will see, most of the fine-line differences between myself and my friend is a matter of semantics and of no practical difference (what some would call the “universal-invisible church”, I would call the “family of God”). However, the problem I see prevalent with many today is not having a strong local-church emphasis and it is that indifference I wish to dispel.

Regardless of our understanding of the term *ecclesia*, **all believers accept both the local organized assembly and the spiritual fellowship of all the redeemed. The differences between us is where do we draw the line between the two?**

**UNIVERSAL**

(FAMILY OF  
GOD)

**LOCAL**

(ORGANIZED  
ASSEMBLY)

\*\*\*\*\* error \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\* error \*\*\*\*\*

**I believe either extreme of the local church issue is erroneous.** A few of our Baptist brethren have taken the local church to what I believe is an extreme, teaching the necessity of a chain-link succession from John the Baptist to (some of our) modern Baptist churches, the distinction even being carried throughout eternity. However universal church believers also have their extremes: a low view on the local church, ecumenicalism, and lack of church discipline are among its errors.

**THE NT EMPHASIS IS THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS** — I have talked with many through the years which when shown all the information above still believes in the universal-invisible church teaching. As I just mentioned, that no longer frustrates me as long as there is a strong local-church emphasis. But to those who believe in a universal-invisible church, allow me to make a couple observations: without question **the main emphasis of the NT is upon the local assembly of believers**; therefore **if** there is such a thing as a universal-invisible church, it is secondary. And since the emphasis of the NT is upon the local assembly of believers, **any teaching of a universal-invisible church is entirely a metaphor which uses the local assembly as its basis, a picture for which the reality is the local assembly.** I believe remembering these two items will help even those who accept a universal-invisible church to keep the proper emphasis present in the New Testament.

**CHURCH ATTENDANCE IS NOT MAGIC** — Another potential misunderstanding might be that I believed going to church somehow has a “mystical, magical power” and all we need to do is show up and get our “spiritual fix” to guarantee God’s blessings. Rather when I stress the church, it involves a whole set of things which are divinely intertwined: *church attendance, prayer support, financial support, emotional support, teaching, learning, a love for the word of God, a concern for those with whom we’ve covenanted together ...* these are some of the things thought of most quickly. Each of these overlap and are involved in each other. **Church attendance with a hardened heart, an apathetic attitude or the like will not necessarily be corrected**

*merely by stepping in the church building* (although there are times when the Lord sovereignly chooses to intervene and break a calloused heart; this typically does not happen while watching football but while sitting under the word of God). **But when God's man (a missionary, a pastor, a Sunday School teacher or whoever) prays and prepares both his heart and a solid biblical message, and God's people pray and prepare their heart to receive a message from God, the Lord as a rule does a work only He can do.** "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." — Heb 4:12

**WE NEED TO ATTEND CHURCH** — Pastor Fisher observed the following concerning church attendance: **When any believer stays out of church for an extended period, they will either (a) backslide to the point they don't know if they're saved or lost; or (b) become so self-righteous they cannot enter a church service without an air of superiority and being critical.**

***"[The] historical reading concerning the business assemblies of the several petty but independent, self-governing Greek states, with their lawful conference, their free speech, their decision by vote ... sounds much like the proceedings of particular and independent Baptist churches today."***

[B. H. Carroll, *Ecclesia: The Church*]

***"The prevalent Protestant conception of the church is utterly foreign to the conception of the New Testament. But it is almost an impossibility to get modern Christians to recognize that fact. They freely read their ideas into the New Testament and then imagine they have found them there."***

[H. E. Dana, *Christ's Ecclesia — The New Testament Church*]

***"For many [the local church] is all too literal and imperfect and visible. It is much easier to live in a dream church than in a real one."***

[B. H. Kazeem, *The Church and the Ordinances*]

## *The Assembly in Ephesians*

(used 9x; verses quoted are ESV with “assembly” in the stead of “church”; also note just by rendering the Greek word as “assembly” makes a difference in the rendering of the verses)

**L** = local assembly; **G** = generic usage, the church as an institution; **H** = the church in prospect; **U** = Universal Invisible (=the family of God)

	“non-Baptistic” Theology				Baptist or “Baptistic” Theology						
	Best	Hoehner	Lincoln	O’Brien	Anderson	Carroll	Entzminger	Mason	Overbey	Simmons	Williamson
And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the <i>assembly</i> , (1:22)	U	U	U	H		L or G?	L	G	G		G
so that through the <i>assembly</i> the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (3:10)	U	L or U	U	H		G	G		G	G	L or G
to him be glory in the <i>assembly</i> and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (3:21)	U	U	U	H		G	G or H	P	G	G	
<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the <i>assembly</i> , his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the <i>assembly</i> submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the <i>assembly</i> and gave himself up for her, ... <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the <i>assembly</i> to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.... <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the <i>assembly</i> , ... <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the <i>assembly</i> . (5:23-25, 27, 29, 32)	U	U	U	H	G	H	H	P	G	P	both G and H (in v27)

S. E. Anderson, *The Meaning and Use of Ecclesia in the First Christian Century*; B. H. Carroll, *Ecclesia*; Louis Entzminger, *Studies in the New Testament Church*; Roy Mason, *The Myth of the Universal Invisible Church Theory Exploded*; Edward H. Overbey, *The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament*; T. P. Simmons, *Systematic Theology*; Thomas Williamson, *The Universal Church Theory: Weighed in the Balances and Found Wanting*. Peter O’Brien: **“While most commentators interpret these terms as instances of the church universal to which all believers belong and which is scattered throughout the world, there are serious difficulties with this view and it is better to understand the term metaphorically of a heavenly gathering around Christ in which believers already participate (cf. Heb 12:22-24).”** [146f] It is worth-while noting that O’Brien is not a Baptist.

# **Emmanuel Baptist Church of Bellbrook, OH**

## **Church Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

### **For the Advancement of this Church**

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

### **As Christian Stewards**

To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

### **Devotions**

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to educate our children religiously; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

### **As Christian Brethren**

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

### **Before the World**

We shall strive to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

### **When We Move**

We do moreover engage that when we move from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.