

Revelation 1:12-20

REVIEW

We have here two parties

- our glorious Lord Jesus Christ
- the seven churches

The Lord Jesus Christ is the greater party, the more worthy of our attention.

But when John turned, he saw a vision of both the Lord Jesus and the congregations. And the congregations are mentioned first. So I'm going to look into what is said about the congregations first, then what is said about our Lord and Savior in relationship with the congregations.

Rev 1:11 ...the seven churches or congregations which are in Asia

Rev 1:12 ...seven golden candlesticks

Rev 1:13 ...the seven candlesticks

Rev 1:20 ...the seven candlesticks lampstands which though sawest are the seven churches or congregations

We need to be clear on two words here: "candlesticks" or "lampstands" and "churches" or "congregations." Last time... This time...

churches G1577 *ekklesia* lit. out-called or called-out

We have some trouble with this term

- it is the word for the building
- it is the word for the Roman Catholic organization, under Antichrist
- it is the word for a large religious organization, such as "the Church of England"
- it is the word for a church by denomination, as "the Methodist church"
- but none of those is what is meant here in Revelation

So, we're going to do some work on this term, to make sure that we are understanding and communicating the biblical truth.

The word “church” in the form *cyrice* goes back into Old English, appearing in literature to mean any one of

- the church as a spiritual body
- the church as a church building

That is the word used in the Anglo-Saxon gospels, about A.D. 995

There are two main theories about the origin of the word:

- Greek *kuriakos*
- English *circle*

I don't know if the truth about its origin ever will be known.

In Middle English, the word had become

- chirche or cherche or churche, as seen in Wycliffe and Chaucer
- 1390 hand copy extant “chirchis”

In the first half of the 1500s, there was an effort, by early translators not to translate *ekklesia* as “church.” Luther - *gemeyne* Tyndale “congregation.” This held during the first half of the 1500s. But from the 1560 Geneva Bible all the way through to today, the word “church” prevailed as the translation.

1615 Irish Articles

- the word “congregation” does not appear
- the words “church” and “churches” are used

1644 Westminster Confession

-“congregation” appears once in the chapter on the Lord's Supper: “...give both to the communicants, but to none who are not then present in the

congregation.”

- the words “church” and “churches” are used
 - “particular churches”
 - “their churches”

1658 Savoy Declaration - “us of the Congregational way”

-preface by John Owen does not use the word “congregation,” but says, “What we have laid down about churches and their government...”

-in the entire set of documents, “churches” appears many times, but not “congregation” at all

-same use of “congregation” in the article on the Lord's Supper

-no other use of it

Original edition of our confession, 1677, “put forth by the elders and brethren of many **congregations** of Christians (baptized upon profession of their faith) in London and the Country.”

1677 Epistle “to the judicious and impartial reader”

“And this was first put forth about the year 1643, in the name of seven **congregations** then gathered in London...”

1689 General Assembly - foreword to our confession

We, the ministers and messengers of, and concerned for, upwards of one hundred baptized **congregations** in England and Wales (denying Arminianism¹²), being met together in London, from the third of the seventh month to the eleventh of the same, 1689, to consider of some things that might be for the glory of God, and the good of these **congregations**, have thought meet (for the satisfaction of all other Christians that differ from us in the point of baptism) to recommend to their perusal the confession of our faith, which confession we own as containing the doctrine of our faith and practice, and do desire that the members of our **churches** respectively do furnish themselves therewith,

1689.26.6 “...of such all particular **congregations** ought to be constituted.”

1689.26.5 “...particular societies, or churches...”

1689.26.6 “The members of these churches...”

1689.26.7 “To each of these churches...”

1689.26.8 “A particular church...”

1689.26.9 “...the office of bishop or elder in a church...”

1689.26.10 “...in His churches...”

Knollys on Revelation 1:11

...although the **church** in any city, at the beginning and first planting of it, was but one **congregation**...yet when the number of the disciples was multiplied...then the church was necessitated...to assemble themselves together in particular **congregations**...and are called “**churches**.”

What, then? Is there a “Reformed Baptist” practice regarding what to think and say about this?

-We accept “church” and “churches” as standard, traditional terms well established in history and theology. We do not scruple at the use of that term.

-We use “churches” and “congregations” synonymously. Using them synonymously helps keep clear what we mean by “church.”

-We might use the term “congregation” if we want to emphasize

-the church when actually assembled on the Lord’s Day

-the actual local bodies, not the institution generically

e.g. Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

e.g. 1 Corinthians 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you.

Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

In this study, I am going to attempt to use the words “congregations” and “churches” synonymously.

- I. When John Wrote About the Churches, What He Called Each One was *Ekklesia*
- A. Greek *ekklesia*
 - B. That is the Greek word in this place, and in many other places in the New Testament
 - 1. wherever in the Bible you are used to reading or hearing the English word “church,” the original Greek word is *ekklesia*
 - C. The etymology of that word gives us some understanding what it means here
 - 1. *ek* = out
 - 2. *kaleo* = to call
 - 3. so, the concept of people who were called out of their normal place or activity
 - D. In the Graeco-Roman culture of the time, the *ekklesia* was a meeting or assembly of the citizens, usually to debate or decide political questions - Acts 19:24-41
 - E. So, the Greek word *ekklesia* gives us a two-part idea:
 - 1. people are called out
 - 2. to become an assembly; to form a congregation
 - F. *Ekklesia* has passed into some languages untranslated
 - 1. Latin *ecclesia*
 - 2. Italian *chiesa*
 - 3. Spanish *iglesia*
 - 4. French *eglise*
 - 5. Portuguese *igreja*
 - 6. Welsh *eglwys*
 - 7. Irish *an eaglais*

What we read about here in Revelation as the “churches” is, in the original Greek, the *ekklesia*

- II. That Term *Ekklesia* Comes From the Old Testament Scriptures, Where It Referred to Israel, as Called By God to Assemble Before Him As a Congregation
- A. The scriptures record that, in the days of OT Israel, God would have one of His servants call Israel to gather before Him; this included two aspects
 - 1. the people were called
 - 2. the people met together; they assembled; they congregated
 - B. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, before the time Jesus came, this was translated by the Greek word *ekklesia*.
 - 1. *Ekklesia* means literally “called out.”
 - 2. But it was used to mean gathering or assembly or congregation that formed when men were called out to assemble.
 - 3. Therefore, it made a good word for this Old Testament phenomenon of God calling Israel to assemble before Him
 - C. Here are some examples of when Israel was gathered before the Lord, and that congregation or assembly was called the *ekklesia*
 - 1. Deu 4:9-10 God said to Moses, at Mt Sinai, “Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children,” then He spoke to them the Ten Commandments; when that was translated into Greek, it was called the *ekklesia*. Deu 9:10 (all versions read “assembly”)
 - 2. Joshua 8:33-35 Joshua led all Israel in worship, including reading the Bible to them, all Israel, gathered to worship; when that was translated into Greek, it was called the *ekklesia*. (GEN, KJV congregation NKJV, ESV assembly)
 - 3. 1 Kings 8:1-2, 14 When the temple had been built under King Solomon, the King assembled all the leaders of Israel, and all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the King; when that was translated into Greek, it was called the *ekklesia*. (GEN, KJV congregation NKJV, ESV assembly)
 - 4. Nehemiah 7:5, 66 Nehemiah gathered those Israelites who had returned from exile in Babylon, back to Jerusalem, so they could be registered by genealogy; that gathering, when that was translated into Greek, was called the *ekklesia*. (GEN, KJV congregation NKJV, ESV assembly)

5. Joel 2:15-16, 28-32 God, by the prophet Joel, called for the people to be gathered, and told them to pray to the Lord, that He would save them, and prophesied to them about the days when the Holy Spirit would be poured out, and that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; when that was translated into Greek, it was called the *ekklesia*. (all versions read “congregation”)
- D. So, from the Old Testament, we know that the word *ekklesia* describes this thing:
1. God, by His human messenger, calls for His people to come to him, gathering to worship Him
 2. in such a gathering, God’s law and His gospel are proclaimed, and the people pray to God, thanking Him, praising Him, confessing their sins, and crying to Him to save them
- E. So, when the New Testament had not yet been written, this Old Testament thing already was known to God’s people in the Greek language as G1577 the *ekklesia*.
- F. The Lord Jesus and His disciples then used that word, *ekklesia*, to name the New Covenant gathering or assembly or congregation of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

What we call “the church” is, in the original Greek, the *ekklesia*

In the Old Testament scriptures, *ekklesia* referred to Israel, as called by God to assemble before Him as a congregation

G. In the Graeco-Roman culture of the time, the *ekklesia* was a meeting or assembly of the citizens, usually to debate or decide political questions - Acts 19:24-41

1. Acts 19:25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.
2. Acts 19:29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.
 - a) the whole city
 - b) together in the theater
3. Acts 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the **assembly** was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.
4. Acts 19:39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful **assembly**.
5. Acts 19:41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the **assembly**.