

The Church of the Living God

1 Timothy 3:15b

Denny Burk offers this helpful summary:

Just as a household has a certain order to it—with husbands leading and wives helping and children obeying—so also God’s household has a certain order to it. There are elders, there are deacons, and there are members. Since this is God’s house, God defines the offices of the church and the roles and responsibilities of each office. This is not something we are to make up as we go along. This is God’s house, God’s order, and God’s way of doing things. (*Ephesians–Philemon: Vol. XI*, p. 413, ESVEC)

Paul employs two key terms, each of which reaches back into the Old Testament. The first term is the word *church*, which translates the Greek word *ekklēsia*.

Psalm 22:22 (Hebrews 2:9-12; Matthew 16:13-19)

The second Old Testament term used by Paul in his reference to the church here is *living God*.

Jeremiah 10:8-16 (2 Corinthians 6:14-16; Matthew 5:14-16)

Hosea 1:9-10 (Romans 9:1-7, 22-26; 11:17, 19, 23-24; Matthew 7:13-14)

Robert Yarbrough is also helpful when he writes that:

The Ephesian congregation ... with Christ in its midst constitutes a divine dwelling place, an assembly (“church,” *ekklēsia*) where “the living God” is known and worshiped. Quite in contrast are the Greco-Roman gods, who are figments of idolatry (1 Cor 8:5–6; Gal 4:8; cf. Acts 14:11; 19:26). They are effectively dead gods, despite their traditional affirmation in the Roman world. It is striking that Paul would view the (numerically) modest presence of at most surely just a few hundred believers at Ephesus as a locus of the presence of “the living God” in a Roman world dominated by such a contrasting religious consciousness. But both Paul and Timothy were part of an ancient Abrahamic heritage that was accustomed to being a minority presence in a world with contrasting loyalties. (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 219)