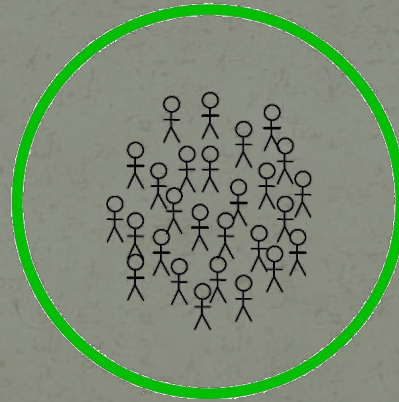


The Church

Something you *attend*? Or something you *are*?



I have searched the scriptures seeking understanding on 'church', stacking up what I read versus what I've experienced.

And I've given up: the thing recognized as 'church' today has analogues in virtually every organized religion in the world, but doesn't match the scriptures at all.

One characteristic
of most 'churches'
today is a usually
distinctly
religiously adorned
and purposed
building
confusingly also
called a 'church.'



I know Judaism after Babylon created 'assemblies' called 'synagogues' and that these met in buildings also called 'synagogues'...but these are nowhere ordained by scripture and in fact Christians are told they would be excluded from these assemblies.

I know Muslims have
'mosques' which again
they serve as religious
meeting places or
temples where prayer
and instruction take
place, just like in
'churches' and
'synagogues.'

It seems strange to me that people who are 'called out' should have so much in common with all the other people around them, one could be forgiven for thinking there was no difference between them at all.

In fact I'd estimate for 95% of those who claim to be 'called out', there is no difference.

When I read about Christian assemblies in the scriptures, I note they are usually identified by two things:

- 1) The city in which they are located
- 2) The home in which they meet

A specific building is not even in the picture...

Cornelius for example was sent to a house in a town to find Peter, not to a 'church':

“and now send men to **Joppa**, and send for a certain one Simon, who is surnamed Peter, this one doth lodge with a certain **Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea**; this one shall speak to thee what it behoveth thee to do.”

Act 10:5-6

When Peter was delivered by the angel, it was at Mary's house that he found a large group of disciples gathered for prayer, not at a 'church':

“And Peter having come to himself, said, 'Now I have known of a truth that the Lord did send forth His messenger, and did deliver me out of the hand of Herod, and all the expectation of the people of the Jews;' also, having considered, **he came unto the house of Mary**, the mother of John, who is surnamed Mark, where there were **many thronged** together and praying.”

Act 12:11-12

Paul sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and the assembly meeting at their house in Rome:

“Salute **Priscilla and Aquilas**, my fellow-workmen in Christ Jesus— who for my life their own neck did lay down, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the assemblies of the nations— and **the assembly at their house**; salute Epaenetus, my beloved, who is first-fruit of Achaia to Christ.”

Rom 16:3-5

Paul greeted Nymphas and the assembly in his house:

“salute ye those in Laodicea—brethren, and Nymphas, and the assembly in his house; and when the epistle may be read with you, cause that also in the assembly of the Laodiceans it may be read, and the epistle from Laodicea that ye also may read;”

Col 4:15-16

And again:

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timotheus the brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker, and Apphia the beloved, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and the assembly in thy house:”

Phm 1:1-2

I suppose it is okay to let this person into your 'church' even though not into your 'house'?

“every one who is transgressing, and is not remaining in the teaching of the Christ, hath not God; he who is remaining in the teaching of the Christ, this one hath both the Father and the Son; if any one doth come unto you, and this teaching doth not bear, **receive him not into the house**, and say not to him, 'Hail!' for he who is saying to him, 'Hail,' hath fellowship with his evil works.”

2Jn 1:9-11

The scriptures are actually quite specific about where the assembly met:

“Daily also continuing with one accord in the temple, **breaking also at every house bread**, they were partaking of food in gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people, and the Lord was adding those being saved every day to the assembly.”

Act 2:46-47

How many scriptural witnesses does it take before one agrees the pattern set by the most explosive, powerful, effective assembly in history?

“they, indeed, then, departed from the presence of the sanhedrim, rejoicing that for his name they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour, **every day also in the temple, and in every house**, they were not ceasing teaching and proclaiming good news—Jesus the Christ.”

Act 5:41-42

Three should be enough?

“how nothing I did keep back of what things are profitable, not to declare to you, and **to teach you publicly, and in every house**, testifying fully both to Jews and Greeks, toward God reformation, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Act 20:20-21

And that leaves only the distinction as to place, what city the assembly was in.

There are too many references to list all, but you can find them at the beginning of most of Paul's letters, and listed in Revelation. Following are some of them:

“Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes the brother, **to the assembly of God that is in Corinth**, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all those calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place—both theirs and ours:”

1Co 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle—not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who did raise him out of the dead—and all the brethren with me, **to the assemblies of Galatia:**”

Gal 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God,
to the saints who are in Ephesus, and to the faithful in
Christ Jesus: Grace to you, and peace from God our
Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!”

Eph 1:1-2

“Paul and Timotheus, servants of Jesus Christ, **to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi**, with overseers and ministrants; Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Php 1:1-2

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, to the assembly of
Thessalonians in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus
Christ: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father,
and the Lord Jesus Christ!”

1Th 1:1

So recognize that from Paul and God's point of view, his letter applied to and would reach every single believer in that city.

Could that even happen today, with all the divisions, schismatic leaders and doctrines?

If you say "no", then what should be thrown out...the scriptures, or the schisms?

Now 'form' follows 'function'. In other words, the tool used for a particular purpose takes on a shape which is suited to that purpose.

That would be why modern 'churches' are convenient places to rest rear ends and not suited to much else, open for a few hours on Saturday or Sunday and then vacant the rest of the week.

But that is NOT what the scriptures describe for the assemblies.

The assemblies form on the basis of working out obedience to Jesus' one 'old/new' command: to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

And it is manifestly impossible to love anyone one in a real meaningful way in a 'church/temple'.

No, loving one another is much better suited to every day life in homes. And that is what the scriptures clearly describe for anyone who cares to look, measure, and judge.

Well, this issue is being sorted as I put this together, because 'churches' are being sifted into 'business as usual' groups meeting in their religiously appointed buildings...

...and those forced out because they refuse to meet the conditions of entry to those places of 'worship'.

This is by God's design...because it is time for the Bride to get clean.

So open up your homes and start showing some hospitality to each other as commanded from the beginning, because this is no time so true as now:

“And **of all things the end hath come nigh**; be sober-minded, then, and watch unto the prayers, and, before all things, to one another having the earnest love, because the love shall cover a multitude of sins; **hospitable to one another, without murmuring**; each, according as he received a gift, to one another ministering it, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God;”

1Pe 4:7-10