

# Assembly Basics

## Session 1: The Basic Particulars of an Assembly

### 1. DISTINCTIONS REGARDING THE ASSEMBLY (Matt 16:13-20; Matt 18:15-20)

- **It is PEOPLE:** word “church” in NT Gk. “*ekklesia*”, a group of people summoned together from their circumstances with a common purpose. The word “assembly” conveys the meaning best.
- **It is not THE BODY OF CHRIST:** “My Church” (Matt 16:13-20): all believers from day of Pentecost to the Rapture - *the church which is the body of Christ*. “**the Church**” (Matt 18:15-20): a gathering or congregation of believers in a place - *the local church or the local assembly*.
- **It is not ISRAEL:** National congregation of Israel is “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). But the church is a **FUTURE** thought (Matt 16:18) to come after the ministry of Christ, as well as **FRESH** thought (Eph 2:15-16) distinct from the nation of Israel.
- **It is not THE STATE:** A civil Assembly in Ephesus is referred to as an “assembly” (Acts 19:32, 39, 41; Gk. *ekklesia*) but the church which is the body of Christ and the local assembly are separate and submissive to any civil authority (Rom 13:1).
- **It is not A BUILDING:** The word “church” never refers to a building in the NT. Note the church (i) has ears and can listen and speak with one voice (Acts 11:22; Matt 18:17); (ii) was gathering in a person’s home (Rom 16:5; Philemon 1:2); (iii) has emotions (Acts 5:11); (iv) prays (Acts 12:5).

### 2. DESCRIPTIONS OF AN ASSEMBLY (1 Cor 1:2)

- “**the Church of God**” (1 Cor 1:2): refers to the local assembly (Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9; Acts 8:1-3 refer to Assembly at Jerusalem). God’s **PROPERTY**.
- “**the Churches of Christ**” (Rom 16:16): the **PURPOSE** is to proclaim Christ.
- “**the Churches of the Saints**” (1 Cor 14:33): to be marked by **PURITY** and composed of “set apart” people.
- “**the Churches of the Gentiles**” (Rom 16:4): God’s **PLAN** reached beyond Jews resulting in Assemblies not only in the Jewish areas but also in mainly Gentile areas.
- “Christians” (Acts 11:26); “disciples” (Acts 6:1); “saints” (1 Cor 14:33); “believers” (Acts 2:44).

### 3. DIGNITY ASSOCIATED WITH THE ASSEMBLY (Matt 18:15-20)

- **THE LORD in the Assembly:** Assembly has authority to (i) **SPEAK** (18:17); (ii) **SUPPLICATE** (18:19); (iii) have **STANDARDS** (18:18). Why? The Saviour is in the midst.

This status and the His presence is only promised to an Assembly which gathers “in (or better “unto”) His name. This means the Assembly takes His Name as their identity: (i) **Christ is the Attraction** - we are drawn to Him; (ii) **Christ is the Authority** - His word is law; (iii) **Christ is Adequate** - we do not need central headquarters or an overseeing archbishop; (iv) **Christ is our Association** - we publicly link with Him and disassociate from anything that is contrary to Him and His word.

- **LABELS for an Assembly:** Other names unwarranted, elevating something other than Christ: (i) a doctrine e.g. baptist; (ii) a network e.g. Elim; (iii) a man e.g. lutheran; (iv) a purpose e.g. community church; (v) a confusion e.g. putting sign stating “fellowship” or “church” on building.
- 4. **DIFFERENCES IN THE ASSEMBLY (Jn 4:22-24; Rev 1:12-13, 20; Acts 20:17, 28)**
- **ITS SIMPLICITY (Jn 4:22-24):** Elaborate temple worship full of senses and shadows has given way to simplicity, the spiritual realm and substance in Christ. Enemies of simplicity through the ages are Paganism (2 Cor 6:14-18), Judaism (Heb 13:13); Christendom (Rev 18:4). Only authorised to do what is found in NT and those things necessary for carrying that pattern out.
- **IT IS STANDALONE (Rev 1:12-13, 20):** Christ walks in midst of the local Assemblies. Each Assembly answers to Him alone. He speaks directly to the Assembly not through a central body. Only connection between each Assembly in the vision is that they all have a connection with Christ. Autonomous - “self-governing”. Independent - “not depending on man or organisations.” Both words fall short in conveying situation.
- **ITS SHEPHERDING:** One-man, salaried pastor not found in the NT. God has raised up men to care for and lead His people in the context of local Assemblies but the truth of the NT is quite different to what is often found. The existence of overseers doesn’t make an Assembly but can break an Assembly (Acts 14:23). Note: **Identity** “elders”, “overseers”, and “shepherds” (Acts 20:17, 28). **Suitability** (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). **Plurality** (Acts 20:17). **Locality** (Acts 20:17). **Equality** (1 Pet 5:1-4). **Unity** (Acts 15:6). **Authority** (Heb 13:17).
- 5. **DEVOTION TO THE ASSEMBLY (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:15)**
- **THE ASSEMBLY IS PRECIOUS:** Purchased “with his own blood” (Acts 20:28) - lit. with the blood of His own [son] - (NET/Darby). Each Assembly paid for by the blood of Christ. The people and the pattern are precious. It matters how people conduct themselves as part of a local assembly (1 Tim 3:15).
- **THERE IS A PROBLEM:** In NT only 3 things in a place: synagogue, temple, Church of God (1 Cor 10:32). Now complicated - congregations which claim to be an Assembly of God, but do not follow pattern. Many true believers involved.
- **WE MUST PRIORITISE:** in such a landscape of confusion believers must prioritise and devote themselves to that which God has called precious, and leave the rest to God.