

The word from which we get “church” is the Greek word “ecclesia” which literally means “assembly”. Consider that we have made a giant mistake in religious history in that we have called local ecclesias and the body of Christ ecclesia by the wrong word. What is Christ originally intended that the word “assembly” should be used for local churches and the body of Christ. You know, don’t you, that one of the approximately 128 times the word “ecclesia” is used the New Testament, the one at Ephesus as described in Acts (Acts 19:32) is an assembly of Ephesian citizens that came together against Paul and Christians. **{This assembly of silversmiths fearful that a Christian movement would cut down on their profits, plead a threat against the great goddess Diana of the local Ephesian temple.}** You know what should bother us about church for ecclesia instead of assembly, is because of a lack of continuity between the New Testament and Old Testament. Not so much the exact word but the concept. And if indeed we stick with “assembly” for ecclesia, then we have in the congregation of Israel the assembly word and concept. This was what might be called the first great assembly of God’s people before God Himself, and in the wilderness at Mount Sinai, after rescue from Egyptian bondage by God. Yes, it is “ecclesia” and “assembly” in the Greek language version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint; but the concept of “assembly” more than “church” is also in the original Hebrew.

**28-1: Congregation in the Old Testament.**

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## “My Assembly”

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Briefly to enlarge our concept of the “My Assembly” of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will briefly look at “congregation” in the Old Testament, also how the same word “congregation” was used by the Apostle Paul, next to Jesus the number one proper interpreter of Old Testament Scriptures.

### 1. Congregation in the Old Testament.

#### a. Literal meanings of the Hebrew words translated “congregation”.

First we should quickly look at the Hebrew words that are translated “congregation” in the Old Testament Scriptures: (1) “edah” for an appointed meeting; (2) “moed” for both a meeting place and the meeting itself; and (3) “qahal” for an assembly called together. **{If you desire you can look in any good Concordance such as YOUNG’s or STRONG’s to find all the scriptures that use those three Hebrew words.}** The largest number usage is for “an appointed meeting”, and the second is for “an assembly called together”. Two other Hebrew words, “maqheloth” for “assemblies” called together **{plural which reminds us of the distinct local church usage of “ecclesia” more than the “general assembly”, total church body usage of Hebrews 12:23}** in Psalm 68:26--“Bless you God in the congregations”--and “maqhelim” also for assemblies called together in Psalm 26:12--“in the congregation will I bless the LORD.”

**NOTE: I don’t know about you, but already I am feeling a lot better about the “Assembly” of Christ. It gets us out of the mud and mire that religious history with so many churches, so many varieties of THE CHURCH, and denominations has put us in. Surely we have started to pursuit here of something that can make us feel much better about the Assembly of Christ to which we belong, yet to be completely defined. By way of the congregation, we must go through the startling statement by Jesus to the chief priests and scribes {I think Paul was there among them, one reason that Jesus spoke so plainly and without a parable} as recorded in Matthew 21:43,44; through the rock and stones of Peter’s confession of faith in Matthew 16:16-19, where Jesus made the “my church” doctrinal statement; along with the way the Apostle Peter interpreted all this in his letter to the dispersed Jews, I Peter 2:4-10, where Peter mentions other “living stones” (2:5) like himself that are being built up as a “spiritual house” {this should remind you of assembly and of the true house of God after destruction of the Temple}, also like Jesus Peter quotes on the “chief conerstone” from Isaiah 28:16 and Isaiah 8:14; and then more.**

**Warning:** we are going to find that the “kingdom of God” as used by Jesus, especially in Matthew 21:43,44 in that startling doctrinal statement of how the kingdom of God is taken away from the Jews and given to another nation, is much closer to the meaning of Christ’s Assembly than we have thought. The problem with which we must deal is with that “other nation”, and we will lean on the Apostle Paul, chief interpreter of Old Testament next to Jesus, and perhaps one in the crowd with the “chief priests and scribes” who heard Jesus make the doctrinal statement.

b. A typical example in the Old Testament.

In the same larger context where God told Moses at Mount Sinai to “make Me a sanctuary {of course the first was the tabernacle}, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8), the context of the giving of the 10 commandments, the same context of the Mount Paul begins with in Hebrews 12 that “burned with fire”, the word congregation for an appointed meeting is used 14 times in Exodus, 66 times in Numbers {5 times in Psalms with some of the most meaningful insights}, the word congregation for an assembly called together is used the most times in II Chronicles, 25 times; and you guessed it many of them centered around Solomon’s dedication of the Temple, so that the preface to Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the Temple begins with “Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel...” (II Chronicles 6:12)

**NOTE:** By the way on another note of a foretaste to come, and in reference to what Jesus said about “another nation” to take the place of the Jews as God’s people, also of Peter’s interpretation of the rock of My Church, it should be pointed out briefly from the context of Exodus that God also called the nation of Israel then “a holy nation” and a “special people”. In short, I think the nation we are looking for to take the place of Israel is not a nation like most commonly used in the dictionary and conversation, it is more like a chosen and assembled people for Christ, you know very similar to the kingdom of God. You know, I think, this will also keep Dr. R. G. Lee happy as he looks down on us from heaven, and with his objections to the total church body as an invisible assembly, because this assembly of Christ that we are beginning to identify from Scripture is much more **VISIBLE**.

2. Congregation from the Apostle Paul.

b. Congregation is there in Hebrews 12 without the word.

While the word “congregation” is not used in Hebrews 12 as Paul makes the contrast between what we have come to--part of which is the “assembly” and church of the firstborn, written in heaven” (12:23)--instead of the congregation at Mount Sinai, the concept is definitely there. It makes even more meaningful both the word reference and thorough description of the assembly of Christ in Hebrews 12:23 and of “the kingdom” in Hebrews 12:28.

b. A Good Definition of the Assembly of Christ of the “My Assembly”.

“to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” **{I like the “written in heaven” of the King James Version best here.}** But do you notice all though Paul is rushing to the conclusion of Hebrews 12, having started with the poetic description of what we have not come to in the law and Mount Sinai, and then briefly describing the 7 doctrinal facts of what we have come to--New Jerusalem, legions of angels, the general assembly, God, large multitude of just men from the kingdom of God of all time, to Jesus, to the blood--then rushing to the kingdom which can not be shaken of 12:28 and the further more adequate definition of God as also “a consuming fire” (12:29).

The general assembly of Christ of which all real believers--past, present, and future--are a member is:

(1) church of the firstborn, and of course as the first resurrected from the dead Jesus is the firstborn, the cornerstone also if you would, the first stone, of the building of this holy tabernacle; and

(2) the roll call is the registration in heaven where man can not get to it or tamper with the final determined by God only number of God's people, this assembly that we are looking for and want to feel good about!

c. In his rush to the kingdom in 12:28--“a kingdom which cannot be shaken”, it should be obvious that Paul has gone all the way through history from the congregation of Israel before Mount Sinai to the assembly of Christ to final Kingdom of God.

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“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28,29)

### 28-2: The “Kingdom of God” in Matthew 21:43,44.

1. The Startling “Kingdom of God” Statement by Jesus recorded by Matthew in 21:43,44.

So startling is the doctrinal statement of Jesus, almost casual and in the midst of other parables and Old Testament quotes that easily attract more attention, that we might miss the amazing significance for us and the Jews.

“Therefore {you know there is a conclusion here after the telling of the two parables to the chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes (21:45 and 21:23) with the “therefore”, a habit that Paul also learned from the Master Teacher, those parables of course of the “two sons” and of “the wicked vinedressers”} I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you {we will need to look at the predictions of Matthew 24 on the “will be” as the time, the time of the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel, 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and of the taking way of burnt sacrifices, also the predictions of Zechariah that only one third of the Jews would not be cast off but those going through persecution} and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone {here obviously Christ is the stone and faith in Christ that He introduced earlier with Peter but did not fully explain until now} will be broken {and repentance is the breaking process with the mild yoke of Christ}; but on whoever it falls {yes, judgment is coming around the corner for the Jews, which came approximately 40 years later visibly but also invisibly as two--thirds of the nation was rejected as God’s people of the kingdom of God--of course as we look back on history, then and now, it is obvious!}, it will grind him to powder.” {Like repentance and faith is individual, so the judgment on those called but not chosen is personal--that is, “it will grind Him to powder.”.} (Matthew 21:43,44)

NOTE: We will take a brief breather while you are allowed to collect your wits on one of the most startling and overlooked teachings from Jesus. What surprises us is that one who used parables so often to keep the Jews and others from knowing the truth, would just to the chief priests and other religious leaders, perhaps Paul among them, would just come right out and

say that the kingdom was taken away from them and given to a Gentile nation.

2. Respect for the Chief Priests and Possible Paul, or something else?

We can speculate on several possibilities as to why Jesus spoke so plainly in Matthew 21:43,44: (1) It is obvious that John, Matthew, and even Jesus respected the office of the Chief Priests that Jesus Himself as co-coordinator with the Father had established with the given of the law and tabernacle; (2) Perhaps Paul, the lawyer and Pharisee of the Pharisees, was in the group with the chief priests and Pharisees and scribes, and Jesus knowing that later on the road to Damascus Saul would be called to be Paul, chief editor of the New Testament, an Apostle born out of due time, and writer chosen by God as a major part of His ministry {Galatians 2:8} to write 14 of the 27 New Testament books, also one who would define that Gentile nation to take the place of the Jews as the people of God; (3) since Jesus had started talking plainly at this historical point as noted by the Apostles in John 15, and knowing the inevitability of the opposition that led to crucifixion, He also spoke plainly here. You know how God also said like in Malachi that He would not do anything without letting the people of God know it, and at this point at least for approximately 40 more years the Jews were God's people of the kingdom of God.

3. You must see this startling statement in the total context of the Teachings of Christ.

a. In the context of Daniel.

b. In the context of Zechariah.

c. In the context of Peter's Profession of Faith in Matthew 16:13-19 and John x:xx.

d. In the context of the quote of Psalm 118:22,23 about the "chief cornerstone" and other stones immediately before the startling statement of Matthew 21:43,44, in Matthew 21:42.

**“Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures:**

**'The stone {there were and are many stones which the Apostle Peter also makes clear when he also quotes from I Peter this same place in the Old**

Testament} which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. {yes, obviously Jesus and faith in Jesus like expressed by Peter, leaving us only to explain the binding on earth and heaven} This was the LORD's doing {the plan of God for the kingdom and for the Assembly of Christ}, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

And what is almost even more marvelous is that it has taken us all of this turmoil about church, churches, and denominations, and over two thousand years, to come to recognize these plain teachings of Christ and Peter.

**28-3: Not a Pope, Peter certainly was a rock as he explained “Assembly” to us.**

While Peter was certainly not a Pope as claimed to some famous among us {clearly identified as such by the fact that the Ascended Christ in Ephesians 4:10,11 only appointed or commissioned “prophets and apostles, pastors and teachers, and evangelists”, all else being man-made, man-desired, and a re-write of history}, he was certainly a “rock” like Jesus the rock and cornerstone of the assembly when in I Peter 2:4-10 he both: (1) properly explained the statement about Jesus as He played with “peebles” {Petra} and rocks, to give the very foundation of His “My Assembly” as a profession of stone like faith, as Peter expressed, as faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and (2) forever bound on earth in the Scriptures and in heaven, where God honors His own word, are these teachings of Peter in I Peter 2:4-10, and other of the epistles of Peter and the Paul that Peter vouches for in II Peter 3:16, is the real meaning of “upon this rock will I build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

1. Yes, the keys of the “kingdom of heaven” {and that is much like the kingdom of God, and you will see the two phrases used often interchangeable in the Sermon on the Mount, among the most clear of all teachings on the kingdom of God and heaven} were given to Peter, and all the writing Apostles like John and Paul, even as Peter in the profession of faith expressed that faith as representative of the Apostles and other disciples.

a. The epistles of Peter, like Paul and other writing Apostles and even Prophets, are bound by God on earth, the Bible was given from God to humanity on earth, just like being the Word of God it is forever and immutable bound in heaven.

“...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and

**unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” (II Peter 3:15b,16)**

You know the Pope and his cohorts in the Roman Vatican would have been more believable in their rewrite of history had they made Paul and Peter co-popes; but they didn't, and unfortunately these of the church at Rome who first declared (1) that the pastor, or bishop, of the church at Rome was the head bishop and should be called Pope **{isn't it true that everyone all wants the first seats at the feast and to be the top dog}**, (2) Peter was the first pope in spite of Peter telling us nothing about it, or the other Apostles, and primarily Jesus the Ascended Christ did not list "pope" among pastors and teachers, apostles and prophets, and evangelists, and (3) the head bishop at Rome, according to them in the Roman Vatican, was successor to Peter as Pope. **{That takes a lot of imagination, but a very large body of people have been convinced that it is true, and how do you explain that?}**, did a rewrite of history after the Bible as the Word of God was completed approximately 100 A.D. Yet we need not think that God did not know this was going to happen, and inspire Apostles like Peter to write about it. **{See below.}**

b. Just some of the Scriptures as Word of God that Peter and the other Apostles like Paul bound on earth in a book even as bound in heaven as the original words that "proceeded out of the mouth of God", like Jesus said earlier. (Luke 4:4)

(1). Shortly Peter writes, "there will be false teachers among you" **{even as there were false prophets among the people of God of the OT}** that will: bring in "secretly" destructive heresies, to the extent that they deny the very Lord who paid for their salvation, bring on themselves swift destruction, follow their destructive ways, cause the truth to be blasphemed, use their own covetousness to exploit the assemblies of Christ **{and kingdom of God}** with deceptive words {boy, do they ever have words and deceptive words with almost every teaching and statement that proceeds out of their mouth as contrary to the sound doctrine of the Bible as originally given. And while their judgment seems to never come, Peter writes, it seems for long time to be idle, their destruction is not asleep. (II Peter 2:1-3)

(2). Peter binds on earth and in heaven, much like the epistle of Paul aso does in II Timothy 3:16,17, that the Scriptures came as "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Peter 1:21)



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2. Peter, Paul, and the other writing Apostles like John and Jude have once for all bound for us on earth what God has established as the Word of God in heaven. This is “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) with no need of special revelations from the Pope and Vatican council, the Mormons, the charismatics, and the fundamentalists of Scofield persuasion.

### 28-4: Peter's Binding Interpretation of the rock and the “My Church”.

If I were you, since the Pope has a personal interest at stake in this and the Roman Vatican, much for their survival like when the chief priests warned the Sanhedrin that Jesus must die for the nation and to preserve their status {John 11:50}, it would be far better to listen to Peter for yourself, and then decide on what Jesus meant by both “My Assembly” and the rock upon which to build the church. What is Peter's interpretation of the Church?

1. Jesus the rock was a “living stone”, precious, thought rejected by men, He was chosen by God. (I Peter 2:4)

2. You Christians **{believers}** are also “living stones” in that: (1) you are in the process of being built up as a SPIRITUAL HOUSE **{yes, there is the house of God and the tabernacle and the temple that we really wanted as we labored through the chapters of this book}**; (2) a holy priesthood **{you need no other priest}**; and (3) you can offer up in worship and prayer your own “spiritual sacrifices” to God and Christ. (I Peter 2:5)

a. This Assembly of the Spiritual House is defined both before and after I Peter 2:5, first before: (1) Like a newborn babe desire the milk of the Word of God; (2) It is through the Bible as the Word of God and your personal intake of that milk of the Word that you grow; and (3) that is, if you have already through faith “tasted that the Lord is gracious”, and you want more. (I Peter 2:1-3)

b. Oh yes, there is also the plea, and you know who this is talking about, to lay aside all: (1) malice, (2) deceit, (3) hypocrisy **{does this not remind you of I Timothy on the proper way to discipline an elder, without prejudice and partiality, and the bad practices under the disguise of the unity of the Spirit where Warren and his cult discipline when there are threats to their own leadership}**, (4) envy, and (5) evil speaking. (I Peter 2:1).

c. The after description of the Assembly of Christ, the Spiritual Building, with three quotes from the Old Testament and then the proper interpretation of those quotes in I Peter 2:6-10.

**28-5: More Descriptions from Pope Peter on the Assembly, Spiritual House.**

Yes, at least a section should be dedicated to I Peter 2:4-10 on the Old Testament quotes of Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14 with their proper interpretation by the Apostle Peter **{God through Peter and you can hear Jesus talking here}** in I Peter 2:8b-10. Please notice the similarity between the content and the interpretations of Peter and Jesus in and around Matthew 21.

1. The quote, with Peter's introduction, of Isaiah 28:16 in I Peter 2:6.
2. The quote, with Peter's preface, of Psalm 118:22 in I Peter 2:7 and how Jesus quotes both 118:22, and 23. Peter knew that these Christian Jews of the dispersion **{part of the one third}** would read Matthew on the teachings of Jesus and the more complete quote of Psalm 118:22,23.

a. Peter's preface in 2:7 addresses "you who believe" as part of this Assembly of the Spiritual House, also two groups of response to Jesus claim to be the Son of the Living God, the Messiah-Christ of the Old Testament: (1) those who believe He is precious because they do believe and know, and (2) the disobedient. (I Peter 2:7)

b. The short version from Peter of the Isaiah 118:22,23 quote used by Jesus in Matthew 21: 42.

3. Peter's addition of the quote of Isaiah 8:14 of how this stone of Christ was to the Jews and other disobedient unbelievers "a stone of stumbling" and "a rock of offence"--here we have more stones and rocks--which of course would be the equivalent of the grinding to powder, from Jesus, that happens when Jesus as the chief cornerstone falls on the unbelieving.

4. The interpretations from Peter of Jesus' teachings and the Assembly of the Spiritual House.

a. The way in which unbelievers stumble is in that they are "disobedient to the word" which was written to describe them **{“to which they were also appointed” .}** (I Peter 2:8b)

b. You as an Assembly of the Spiritual House are: (1) a chosen generation **{among the one-third of Jews chosen in spite of most of the nation being rejected}**; (2) a royal priesthood; (3) "a holy nation", well there is the "another

nation” partially described as a nation, the few Jews among the larger number of Gentiles as Paul would explain with the Scriptures that he wrote in Romans {aren't you amazed at the difference in perspective between Scriptures, and this comes from God as His own perspective, the words and concepts with which we operate and talk today in our churches and denominations; and should we know show much more preference for the sound doctrine of the Scriptures}; (4) God's own special people {well, there is again, a re-defining in New Testament times of God's people when the Jews as a nation were rejected}.

c. Those NT re-defined people of God of I Peter 2:9,10.

(1). A special people for special worship: to “proclaim the praises {I like the way these praises are defined with understanding, contrary to what those somewhat worldly and superficial in our churches today are calling “praise music”} of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”.

(2). You once were not a people during the Old Testament times, and after the judgment of God and Christ spoken of in Matthew 21:42,43, was carried out as the kingdom of God was removed from the Jews and given to the new Jew and Gentile nation.

(3). You the Assembly of the Spiritual House did not have mercy before, but thank God that you have it now; and being a branch grafted into the original branch of the people of God of the Jewish nation, Paul writes in Romans, do not gloat over the fallen Jews.

