

Clear concepts of the “church” (Sun, 5PM, Jan 5, 2025)

Importance of clear concepts and speech about the church

1. Why is it important to be careful about what we *teach* about the church? **1Tim 4:16**
2. What reflects what we *believe* about the church? **2Co 4:13**
3. What determines what we *do*? **Jam 2:18,21-22**

The following article — “Why so many churches?” was written by a preacher working with a church of Christ in Florida, and is taken from a publication (Oct-Dec, 2024) for Christians. Note the examples of the use of “church” throughout—do they reflect clear, or unclear, concepts of “the church” as presented in the NT? The bold text is mine [*srj*] throughout the article and designed to encourage focus on those phrases—do they convey clear concepts of the “church”? The bolded text and the text in brackets [...] may be of help in testing the accuracy of what is being said. It will probably be helpful if you read the following beforehand. The space on the right can be used to make notes as we talk about it in class.

“In the Bible the word church is derived from the Greek word EKKLESIA which variously means “assembly, congregation, or **a calling out**” [see **Ac 19:30,32?**]. Jesus used this word when He said, “I will **build My church**”, Mt. 16:18. The **Biblical name “church of Christ**” thus means the “called out of Christ”. **His church is referred to as:** “The church, **the church of God, the church of Christ**, the church of the first born”, Col. 1:18, **1 Cor. 1:2, Rom. 16:16**, Heb. 12:23.” [**1Co 1:2, Rom 16:16** refers to the “church” of **Mt 16:18?**]...

“One early departure came in the second century when men decided to change the **organization of Jesus’ church. His church** is made up of **elders, deacons**, and saints (Christians), Phil. 1:1. [By “Jesus’ church” and “His church” is he referring to **Mt 16:18** (previous paragraph)? If so does *that* “church” have “elders, deacons”? If referring to the local church, which one is “Jesus church”—he says later in this paragraph “there was only one church”? And if no particular one, if a church does not have “elders, deacons,” is it “His church”?]”

Other terms for elder are: presbyter, shepherd, bishop, pastor, overseer. There was a plurality of elders in every church, Acts 14:23. It is normal

when you have a plurality of men in any meeting for one to be more dominant or the spokesman. So, it seemed natural to separate that person from the others with a different title. They decided to call the head elder a bishop and the others under him remained elders. Still, in this century **there was only one church** [was it the one in 1Co 1:2 or one of those in Rom 16:16?], one body and one faith.

“As time went on it seemed right and proper to share ideas concerning **worship and the work of the church**. [Is this the “one church” of **Mt 16:18**? If so, what “work and worship” does it perform? Or, is it the worship and work of a local church?] So, eventually ecumenical councils and synods were formed to make rules and solve doctrinal disputes. Bishops and elders came from many countries to participate.” ...

“Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, former Presbyterians and Baptists, along with John Smith, Walter Scott and others said that the need was to go all the way back to the first century and **restore the church Jesus and His apostles established**.” [If “the church” of **Mt 16:18**, Christ controls it, and it will never apostatize. If a local church, which one did Campbell and Stone “restore”? Does he mean restore the *true doctrine* of “the church Jesus and His apostle established”? If so, okay, unless he means “Church of Christ doctrine”...?] ...

“The Disciples of Christ split into two groups forming **the church of Christ officially** even though **the church is a biblical name** [Does the church have a specific “name”?] and probably was in existence without the formal recognition. Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it”, Mt. 16:18.”