

New Testament Church/ἐκκλησία is not a building

Some contemporary Christians have non-biblical ideas of church and church buildings:

“Wow, did you see that beautiful church we just passed?”

“Now that we are in the church we must behave ourselves.”

Consider the preacher who says:

“Isn’t it wonderful to be in the house of God today?”

“We must show reverence when we come into the sanctuary of the Lord.”

The problem is that the whole idea that the church is a building runs counter to New Testament Christianity. None of these thoughts have anything to do with New Testament Christianity. The idea of “going to church” is going to any building, sacred or otherwise, would have been a foreign thought to first-century believers. Consider the following:

1. Throughout the New Testament (NT), church/*ekklesia* always refers to an assembly of people, and never a place. In every one of its 114 occurrences in the NT, it refers to an assembly of people.
2. Christians did not erect special buildings for worship until the Constantinian era in the 4th century. There is absolutely no literary or archaeologically evidence of any church building prior to this period. The first Christians meet in homes. The Christianity that conquered the Roman Empire was essentially a home-centered movement. They did not erect special houses of worship. This fact is uncontested.
3. Christianity was the first non-temple-based religion ever to emerge. It stood in contrast to Judaism as well as Greco-Roman paganism.
4. The early Christians understood that they themselves—corporately—were the temple of God and the house of God.
5. Again, nowhere in the NT do we find terms “church”, “temple,” or “house of God” used to refer to a building. To the ears of the first-century Christian, calling an church a building would have been like calling your wife a condominium or your mother a skyscraper.
6. Since Christ has risen, we Christians have become the temple of God. Christ became a “life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). Therefore, He could take up residence in believers, making them His Temple, His House. It is for this reason that the NT always reserves the word “church” for the people of God.

7. Not only is there no special or sacred “church” building in the New Testament, there are no special sacred classes of people like priests. All Christians are not only temples of God, all are priests as well.

In His Matchless Grace,

Pastor Don