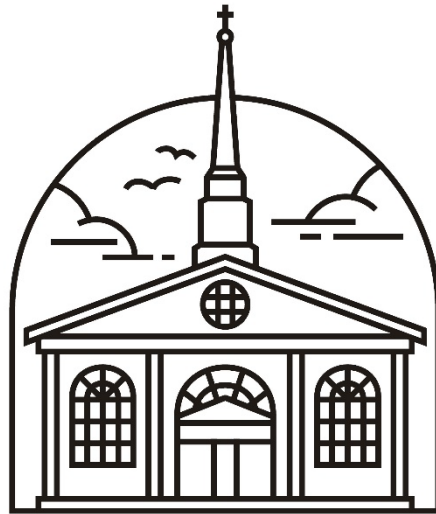


Origin of



the Church

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Introduction

The Church is defined in the New Testament by the Greek word "Ecclesia," which is derived from the root "ek," meaning "to be called out." The use of the term describes a person or people group separated from the general population of humanity to be dedicated to a specific purpose or calling.

The concept is applied to God calling Abram out of the home his father established in Haran to venture to an unknown region further south in Canaan. God commands Abram to separate himself from his father and kindred to fulfill a calling that will bless his descendants and all the nations (ethnic groups) of the world. (Genesis 12:1-4)

The origin of the Ecclesia is formally later represented by Abraham's descendants, nearly nine hundred years later when the Hebrew captives are "called out" and rescued from four hundred and thirty years of oppression. (Exodus 12:6-7) The Hebrews were brought out of the bondage of Egypt to dedicate themselves to worship God. (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 5:6-7) They were assigned to be God's people, and He assigned Himself to be their God. He would establish His tabernacle among them, a physical place where He would receive them into His presence and not reject them. (Leviticus 26:11-12)

These illustrations are the foundations of the Biblical church, the "Ecclesia," a people called and separated from the masses and drawn into the Holy presence of their creator.

The New Testament illustration of the "Ecclesia" is initiated with the literal call for the disciples to follow the Rabbi-teacher and Son of God (God actively present on earth). Each disciple was challenged to separate themselves from the common path of life and follow a new and living way.

Matthew 9:9 – And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

The tax collector was tasked with forcibly collecting tribute payments to meet the quotas established by local officials acting on behalf of Rome. The would-be disciple was unaware that the Rabbi was observing him. Although the man did not change anything about himself or his actions, the invitation to follow the teacher was extended despite his deeds or occupation.

The invitation to separate from the common path or secular way of life is intentionally offered to people opposed to God's way of life. The Church is composed of people who entered into a relationship with God fundamentally opposed to His nature and to His way.

It was extraordinary to converse with the Rabbi, who was diametrically opposed in nature. However, leaving his position of employment with Rome to follow the teacher was exceptional. This illustration represents the extreme conditions of an individual person called out for a greater purpose.

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

The defining moment of the Old Testament Church is referenced in the New Testament in the book of Acts. The early church is chronicled in the Acts of the Apostles, and the author pays homage to the Church in the wilderness.

Moses is the prophet of the Church in the wilderness. He was called out of the Nile River in Egypt, and his life was spared to fulfill a greater calling assigned to him by God. (Exodus 2:5-6) Moses guided the congregation through the wilderness toward the promised land. He was guided to a mountain incensed with fire and smoke in the Sinai wilderness. The voice of God beckoned Moses to ascend the mountain. Amidst the fire and smoke, God spoke to him and provided a tailored manuscript of His divine commandments, the living oracles (words) of God.

The New Testament church is founded upon the principles first established at Mount Sinai, which is the signature symbol of receiving the living word (commandments) of God.