

In the multiplicity of metropolitan Gentile churches there is still only one church in a Greek *polis* (a city). The Greek *polis* becomes the center for mission. Never is there more than one church in a city. At least four steps may be noted. (1) The house church in which believers gathered was the most simple structure of all (1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). (2) The city church composed of all the believers in a *polis* is the usual understanding of the word church (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1). (3) The plurality of churches always goes beyond the single metropolitan area. At times the churches are those of a Roman province such as Judea (1 Thessalonians 2:14; Galatians 1:22), Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:2), Asia (1 Corinthians 16:19), or Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:1). The plurality of churches may also be used in reference to the churches of the Gentiles (Romans 16:4), the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16), or simply churches (Acts 15:41; 16:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 2 Corinthians 8:1, 18, 19, 23, 24; 11:28; 12:13). (4) The New Testament also speaks of the church as the one body of Christ composed of all true believers in all places, but it never speaks of a plurality of churches in one city (Colossians 1:18, 24; Ephesians 1:22f.; 2:14–21; 3:6–10; 4:4, 12; 5:23–33). It comes as a jolt, but it must be said again that the modern concept of a plurality of churches in one city is never found in the New Testament.