

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

**THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY**

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

## WHAT DOES "EKKLESIA" MEAN ?

The presentation of this study demands that the ground be cleared at once. I refuse to plant this seed in a weed patch, and most certainly not on top of a boulder. The Greek word *ekklesia* does not mean "church," no matter what definition is given to this term. If anyone thinks he can stamp his foot or pound the pulpit and this will become true, then he will have to take his place with the Red Queen in *Through the Looking-Glass*, whose sanity was somewhat questionable.

Every student of the reformation is familiar with Martin Luther's strong aversion to the word *church* (*kirche* in German) as a translation of the word *ekklesia*. But Luther was unable to prevail in this and in the end a denomination was named after him called *The Lutheran Church*. The acceptance of the word *church* was due to Calvin's influence.

In a previous study (No. **SB087**) we saw how the Greek verb *kaleo* primarily means to name, to designate, to position, to appoint, or to establish. In the history of this word it seems that at first *kaleo* meant only to call or to summon in the sense of an invitation. But in the prevailing governmental systems that existed in those times, the invitation by a sovereign for a man to serve was equal to an appointment which could not be refused, so *kaleo* came to mean to position, to name, or to appoint, and this soon became its predominant usage. A consideration of all occurrences of *kaleo* in the New Testament will demonstrate the truth of this.

The Greek word *ekklesia* is formed from the descriptive adjective *kletos*, a word that described all who had been named to serve in some position designated by the sovereign. These were designated ones, appointed ones, not merely invited ones. When the prefix *ek*, which means "out," is added to the word *kletos*, it gives us *ekklesia* which means out-called ones, or, to make it more clear, out-positioned ones.

These are facts that are generally known, but they have been misconstrued by many, and probably will continue to be until His lightnings enlighten the world (Psa. 97:4). The exalted meaning of "out-called" is degraded and stultified so that it can be used to signify something that we are today. They say that since the followers of Christ have been called out of the world, this makes us the out-called ones. All this is in spite of the fact that Jesus Christ said of His own, **"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil"** (John 17: 15). They illustrate this by saying that Israel is called "**the *ekklesia* in the wilderness**" (Acts 7: 38), declaring that this was because they had been called out of Egypt. These are not the facts in the case of Stephen's declaration, as will be shown later.

I suppose that the most prevalent error in Christendom today is the idea that when the Lord Jesus said: **"Upon this rock I will build My *ekklesia*"** (Matt. 16: 18), that He was speaking of the great mixture of organized religion that travels under the canopy which today is called "the church." Quite a few men of God, seeing the utter fallacy and impossibility of this being true, limit the privilege of being the *ekklesia* to the true believers in the Lord Jesus, that we are "the church." In regard to this, let it be said that if *ekklesia*, means little or nothing, then we can all claim to be the *ekklesia*, but if this grand word does have a meaning of great significance, then we should be careful about applying such an exalted title to ourselves.

In spite of the attempts to prove otherwise, the word *church* comes from the Latin word for circle, and it is from this that we get our English word *circus*. So today when we see the pretentious parades and the religious extravaganzas that are put on display for all to see, we are convinced that the word *circus* fits it to quite a degree of exactitude. If I were any part of this great three-ring American religious circus, I would hang my head in shame. But, thank God, from all this I have been delivered and separated. I consider all of this highly successful religious activity to be little more than men putting on the **"form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof,"** as Paul said would characterize men in the concluding days of this dispensation of grace (2 Tim. 3:5).

The subject of the New Testament is the kingdom of God (Issue No. 27), and it has been shown in previous studies that "kingdom" means "government" (Issue No. **SB029**). One thing that is essential to any

government, even absolute monarchies, is that men shall be given positions that are out of the sovereign. In the United States we insist that the sovereignty belongs to the people; therefore, our President has a position which is out of the people. He is an out-called or out-positioned one in the true meaning of *ekklesia*. However, let none think that I am saying that our Presidents are the out-called of God. Not in the least! Their position is not out of God; it is out of the people.

Since no man is able to do everything, even if it is his right and duty to do certain things, he gives positions to others, and these then become out-positioned ones, their position being out of the President. However, there must be no thought of severance in the word "out" as used here, no more than when we say the arm is out of the body - not severed from it but projected.

When one gives a position to another, the place given must first be inherent in the one who gives it. It was the declared purpose of Jesus Christ to give many a position out of Himself. These would be a projection of Him, and individually and collectively they would be His out-called, that is, His *ekklesia*. Therefore, Jesus Christ being the Son of God could give others this position so that they might be sons of God. He was God's apostle, and He could give others out of what He was and they too became apostles. He was God's prophet, and He gave of Himself to others and they became prophets. All such had a position out of Him, and were the out-called of God. We could go on through a long list, for He was Shepherd, Teacher, Governor, Miracle-worker, Healer, Evangelist. He was one who could scatter and yet increase (Prov. 11:24).

Thus as the Lord Jesus gave of Himself so that others could become in a measure what He was, He built up His own body (substance) upon the earth (Eph. 4: 12). See my version and notes on Ephesians 4 in Issue No. 61. And we need to note that no man could ever be anything in the sight of God unless this position is first found in Jesus Christ. Truly, Jesus Christ loved the *ekklesia* and gave Himself for it that it might become in a measure what He is.

An illuminating illustration of all this is found in Stephen's message in Acts 7, where in speaking of Moses he declared: "**This is he that was in the *ekklesia* in the wilderness.**" This is usually taken to mean that Stephen was telling these Israelites that Moses was in Israel. If so, this would have been a

bit of gratuitous and useless information, about the same as if I should tell a Britisher that Queen Victoria was a citizen of Great Britain. The *ekklesia* spoken of here was not Israel, and we will miss important truth if we think so.

The man Moses had a position out of God. He was *ekklesia*, an out-called man. He was Israel's Chief Executive, Supreme Judge, and Lawgiver. But let no one choke on the idea of one man being out-called of God. This is one truth that all must learn. As Karl Ludwig Schmidt, the renowned Greek scholar, puts it: "To put the matter in a nutshell - a single individual could be, - would have to be - the *ekklesia* if he has communion with Christ."

Moses was the monarch in Israel. He ruled alone, but when at the suggestion of Jethro (Exo. 18:23), he chose able men out of all Israel and made them "heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens," an enormous *ekklesia* was produced that numbered about 80,000, all of whom had a position out of Moses. And it was a position that he could take back to himself at any time.

However, at a later date, a more important event took place. The burdens that Moses still had to bear became so heavy that he took his complaint to God (Numbers 11:10-15). The Lord responded by telling him to gather seventy men out of the elders of Israel and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation that they might stand with him there. Furthermore, the LORD declared: "**And I will come down and talk with thee there: AND I WILL TAKE OF THE SPIRIT THAT IS UPON THEE, AND WILL PUT IT ON THEM: and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone**" (Num. 11:17).

So it was that these seventy men had a position which was out of Moses. He was in them. They partook of what he was - his position, his substance, his very essence. This is what Stephen was talking about when He said of Moses: "This is he, that was in the *ekklesia* in the wilderness" (Acts 7 :38). He was telling them that Moses was in the seventy, for in fact they were the body of Moses, or his substance, which is what the word *body* means. And it is my understanding that this is what the dispute was about when Michael the archangel contended with Satan over "the body of Moses" (Jude 1:9). Satan was most eager to seize control of the seventy men.

My belief is that in the famous and familiar passage in Matt.16: 18 the Lord speaking through Peter to the ten other apostles (Judas excluded) declared, **"And I say also unto you, that you are rock, even as I am rock, and upon this rock I will build of Me the out-called ones, and not even the power of the state of death shall prevail against them." Indeed, His out-called ones must be built out of Him.**

It is my belief and conviction that no man upon the earth today can truthfully say that he has a position out of God, that he is an out-called one. He can claim certain blessings, yes, but position, no. The chief characteristic of all out-called men is that they mediate between God and men. There were many of these in the thirty-three years of the Acts period, but not one in this the dispensation of God's grace. All anyone can claim today is that he is a sinner saved by grace. But, I also believe that in view of the service we will perform when God governs, we will need to have a position out of Him, and we will need to mediate between God and men. Then we will be units in that great *ekklesia* Jesus Christ said He would build out of Himself.

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