

VI.1. Lambs to Rams: The “Ecclesia”

Anytime this lesson refers to a person or people who have been “called out” it is with reference to a Christian or multiple Christians unless otherwise stated, all who profess Christ and understand their calling and who wholeheartedly adhere to that calling to the best of their ability. The English word that we use for “ecclesia” is church. But what does the word church mean. Webster’s first definition is: a building for public worship, esp. Christian worship. But what did the New Testament writers have in mind when they penned the word “ecclesia” since church buildings didn’t even exist until around the middle of the third century? “Ecclesia” is a compound of one word and a derivative of another which means a “calling out”.

Gk.1577 ἐκκλησία ekklēsia *ek-klay-see'-ah*

From G1537 and G2564; a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth ...): - assembly, church.

Thayer Definition:

1d) in a Christian sense

1d1) an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting

1d4) the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth

Gk.1537 ἐκ, ἐξ ek ex *ek, ex*

Denoting *origin* (the point *whence* motion or action proceeds), *from, out* (of place, time or cause; literally or figuratively; direct or remote):

Gk.2564 καλέω kaleō *kal-eh'-o*

To “call” (properly aloud, but used in a variety of applications, directly or otherwise): - bid, call (forth), (whose, whose sur-) name (was [called]).

These two Greek words together form our English word “church” which is used interchangeably with the word “congregation”. In the Old Testament we find the word “congregation” used either as referring to the children of Israel in general (*Heb.5712*) or as a specific assembly (*Heb.4150*) coming together at a fixed time, specifically for a festival. Acts 7 gives an example of the first meaning.

Act 7:37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear. 38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina...

The Israelites were the “ecclesia”, or called out, of the Old Testament of which Moses was a part. God called them out of all the nations, not that they were more righteous than the others (*Deu 9:4-7*) but for the purpose of having a separated people through whom He would send His Son.

Called out from what?

Since it is to be understood that the word has to do with both a “calling” and an “origin” from which one is being called, added together we get the term “the called out”. But what are we called out from?

2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for **ye** are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 17 Wherefore **come out from among them**, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (*Emp. added*)

If we are called out from one place, way of life, behavior (*etc.*) then we must be called “to” something different. Otherwise there would be no desire to leave our present place, way of life, behavior (*etc.*).

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us **from** the power of darkness, and **hath translated us into the kingdom** of His dear Son: 14 In Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: (*Emp. added*)

What we leave doesn’t compare with what we receive. Once called out from the world, here calling it “the domain of darkness”, God has “transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”, the church, which is where we then receive something worth more than physical gold and silver. What we receive are the “spiritual blessings” (*Eph 1:3*) to be found only in Christ.

The calling

What is the mode in which we are called (*how are we called*)?

2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto He **called you by our Gospel**, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Emp. added*)

And how will I hear it?

Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in **Whom they have not believed?** and how shall they believe in Him of **Whom they have not heard?** and **how shall they hear without a preacher?** (*Emp. added*)

1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the **Gospel** which I **preached** unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, **if** ye

keep in memory what I **preached** unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. (*Emp. added*)

1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross (*the Gospel*) is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (*Rom 1:16*)

That we are called out of the worldly way of doing things will be noticed by others since the world looks at the faith as folly and superstition, especially by those professing atheism; such moral conduct as Christians will either be welcomed or rejected. But how we handle each situation in life, as with regards to the “unbelievers”, will determine the strength of our own personal faith in Christ. After all, aren’t we supposed to emulate Him? Aren’t we called by His name, Christian? (*Act 11:26*)

Names referring to the “called out” in the New Testament

Saints

One name that seems to have been hijacked by Roman Catholicism is the word “saint”. It has been elevated to a position of authority and to be earned by dead men and women who became such, simply speaking, once a miraculous occurrence was attributed to their supposedly answering a prayer. Such goes against what the Bible teaches, in that all our prayers are to go through **only** Jesus.

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

Eph 5:20 Giving thanks **always for all things** unto God and the Father **in the name** (*Gk.3686- authority*) **of** our Lord Jesus Christ; (*Emp. added*)

To use “saint” then should be with reference to **all** the “called out” once sanctified since “saint” means “sacred (consecrated): -holy. When we answer the Gospel call to be saved, once obedient to its message we become separated from the rest of the world and thus “sanctified”; set apart for service to God.

So, let’s look at some New Testament examples of how this word is used. Let’s disregard what mere, uninspired men say and ask “what does the Bible say”?

Rom 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Emp. added*) (“to be” is not in the original manuscript.)

Paul here is addressing the church that met in Rome (*pre-Roman Catholic*) referring to them as “saints”. He wasn’t addressing dead people. Thayer defines the word saint in this verse as “set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His”. “Just as the Israelites claimed for themselves the title of ‘holy’, because God selected them from the other nations to lead a life acceptable to Him ..., so this appellation (*designation*) is very often in the N.T. transferred to Christians, as those whom God has selected ‘of the world’, that under the influence of the Holy Spirit they may be rendered, through holiness, partakers of salvation in the kingdom of God”.

Saints, Christians

Act 11:26 ... And the disciples were called Christians (*Gk.5546- follower of Christ*) first in Antioch.

In most denominational teachings, today’s physical Jews, as was O.T. Israel, are still to be considered God’s chosen people. How they come up with such ideas is beyond understanding when one “rightly divides the word of truth” (*2 Tim 2:15*).

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Rom 11:26 And so **all Israel shall be saved**: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this *is* my

covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (*Emp. added*)

If the Jew is to be considered God's chosen today it would be understood that his status as such would have to be as a **spiritual** Jew, whether he was a Jew or Gentile to begin with wouldn't matter. Once a person has been identified with Christ, having put Him on in baptism (*Gal 3:27*), only then will they be considered a spiritual Jew and only then can they be considered "a new creation".

2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man *be in Christ*, *he is* a new **creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (*Emp. added*)

Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creature**. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the **Israel of God**. (*Emp. added*)

Not all Israel from the standpoint of being born under the Old Covenant will be the Israel that is born into the New Covenant. Not all people, who are part of the Jewish nation, are members of the church the **true** Israel of God. (*Rom 9:6; 11:23-24*)

Saints, Christians, Brethren

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for One is your Master, *even* Christ; and all **ye are brethren**. 9 And call no *man* your (*spiritual*) father upon the earth: for One is your Father, which is in Heaven. (*Emp. added*)

"Jesus forbade His disciples to seek such titles of distinction. The reason which He gave was that He was Himself their Master and Teacher; they were on a level; they were to be equal in authority; **they were brethren**; and they should neither covet nor receive a title which implied either an elevation of one above another, or which appeared to infringe on the absolute

right of the Saviour to be their only Teacher and Master.”
(Emp. added) Albert Barnes

With it now being understood who the “called out” are, and a few distinctions concerning us, we next need to look at the way others look at us. Do they see a difference in our behavior since we’ve become part of those who have been set apart from the rest of the world? Remember, we don’t become better than everyone else because we’ve all “sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (*Rom 3:23*). God’s love for the world was His reason for sending Jesus to save **all** people, even though **all** people won’t be saved.

What we leave behind.

Obviously, when we’ve been called out from the world there’s a certain amount of baggage that we need to leave behind. In different passages the apostle Paul gave lists which are not to be considered comprehensive. In *Gal 5:21*, after giving such a list he concluded with “and things like these” as a way of **not** giving certain sins a pass. And we all know what things are to be considered sin if we are “a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (*2 Tim 2:15*).

1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such **were** some of you: but ye **are washed**, but ye **are sanctified**, but ye **are justified** in the name (*Gk.3686- authority*) of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. *(Emp. added)* (*Rev 21:27; 22:15*)

What we gain, both now and in the future.

We need not wait until Jesus reclaims His bride for the “called out” to receive certain blessings while here in the flesh. A very important blessing we are assured of is to know we “have eternal life” (*1 Jn 5:13*). But there is another blessing that many

in the church may not be aware of, have never had to rely on or some might not know of it because of the lack of Christ-centered fellowship within the congregation they belong to. Do you realize that the moment you became a N.T. Christian, your family increased manifold, so much so that you may not have enough place settings to invite us all over for a family dinner?

Mat 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive **an hundredfold**, and shall inherit everlasting life. (*Mk 19:29 adds, "now in this time".*) (*Emp. added*)

Once we decide to become a part of the "called out" we should never go without. Whether that means food, clothing, shelter or personal relationships, once we become adopted into the family of Christ through the precious price He paid for us with the blood of the covenant (*Mat 26:28*), along with our continued obedience to that covenant, we should never lack in anything.

Heb 13:5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

But the ultimate goal of every human being on the face of the earth should be eternal life in Heaven. Sadly, "the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many" (*Mat 7:13*). Many will not enjoy what so few strive to hold on to. And that's hope.

Eph 4:4 *There is one body (the ecclesia, the called out, the church), and one Spirit, even as ye are called in **one hope** (Gk.1680- expectation) of your calling; (Emp. added)*

Only those who have answered the Gospel call have the hope that belongs to that calling. And we should all look forward to losing that hope someday. "What?!" "Are you kidding?"

1Co 13:13 But **now** abideth faith, hope (*Gk.1680- [to anticipate, usually with pleasure]; expectation or confidence*), charity, these three; and the greatest of these is charity (*Gk.26- love*). (*Emp. added*)

Faith and hope are necessary in this life but will be revealed in the next. We will no longer expect something once we see it in person. The moment the **faithful** saint loses hope at death is the moment Paradise is no longer just an expectation, it is a reality. And speaking of the ultimate goal...

Php 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God **in** Christ Jesus. (*Emp. added*)

"God has called us to great and noble efforts; to a career of true honor and glory; to the obtainment of a bright and imperishable crown. It is a calling which is 'high,' or 'upward' ... The calling of the Christian is from Heaven... He has been summoned by God through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to secure the crown." "It may be his, if he will not faint or tire or look backward. It demands his highest efforts, and it is worth all the exertions which a mortal can make even in the longest life."

Albert Barnes

Humble calling

God has never called, or catered to, what society considers the best or the elitist of all people. He looks to the downtrodden, the poor and meek of the earth as being a source of spiritual strength in making up the inhabitants of His kingdom.

1Co 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in His presence.

VI.1. Questions

1. From what Greek word do we get the term “church”? a) Ecclesia; b) baptidzo; c) apostolic.
2. What group of people does the Greek word for “church” refer to? a) denominations; b) the called out; c) the fortunate.
3. The disciples were first called Christians where? a) Jerusalem, b) Galatia; c) Antioch.
4. What are we called from and where are we called to? a) from darkness into the kingdom; b) from earth to Heaven; c) from hate to love.
5. By what means is a person called? a) from the heart; b) through faithfulness; c) the teachings of the Gospel.
6. What is a saint? a) one who is sacred; b) one who is smart; c) neither a nor b.
7. What does it mean to be a Jew in the New Testament? a) to be of the seed of Jacob; b) to be of the spiritual family of God; c) to live in Palestine.
8. What blessings do Christians receive in this life? a) financial help and prosperity; b) eternal life lacking nothing; c) neither a nor b.