

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”.

G1577 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 (*Greek scholar*) 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

G1537 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):

G2564 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]).

- Putting these two **Greek** words together forms 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 the **Moses** who said to the **Israelites**, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.' *38* This is the one who was in the congregation (*1577- church*) in the wilderness with the angel **Who** spoke to him at **Mount Sinai**...

- The **Israelites** were the “ecclesia”, or called out, of the **Old Testament** in which **Moses** was a part of. **God** called them out of all the nations for the purpose of having a separated people through whom **He** would send **His Son**. But when did **God** first call any certain group of people to be **His** chosen? Very early on.

Gen 4:26 To **Seth** also a son was born, and he called his name **Enosh**. At that time people began to **call upon** the name (*Heb.8034- authority*) of the **LORD**.

“...those who call on the name of the **Lord** are themselves called the children of **God**.
...it seems a very strange thing that calling upon the name of the **Lord** should only begin two hundred and forty years after the creation of man.”

Albert Barnes

- What Albert Barnes is saying here then is that man has called on **God** from the beginning and after the fall through a sacrificial system and through prayer. It wasn't until man developed a **covenant** relationship with the **Father** through his obedience to **God's** will that **He** began to call **certain** people out of the world that surrounded them.

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 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? **15** What accord has **Christ** with **Belial** (*Gk.955- worthlessness, as an epithet [nickname] of Satan*)? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? **16** What agreement has the temple of **God** (*the church*) with idols? For **we** are the temple of the living **God**; as **God** said, “I will make **My** dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their **God**, and they shall be **My** people. **17** Therefore **go out from** their midst, and be separate from them, says the **Lord**, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, **18** and I will be a **Father** to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to **Me**, says the **Lord Almighty**.”

- 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 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and **transferred** us to the kingdom of **His** beloved **Son**, **14** in **Whom** we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- 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 ought always to give thanks to **God** for you, brothers beloved by the **Lord**, because **God** chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the **Spirit** and belief in the truth. **14** To this **He called you through our gospel**, so that you may obtain the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.

- ...and how will I hear it?

Rom 10:14 How then will they call on **Him** in **Whom** they have not believed? And how are they to believe in **Him** of **Whom they have never heard**? And how are they to hear without someone **preaching**?

1Co 15:1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the **gospel I preached** to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, **if** you hold fast to the word I **preached** to you--unless you believed in vain.

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross (*the gospel*) is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of **God**.

- 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**?

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 said to him, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**”

Eph 5:20 giving thanks **always and for everything** to **God the Father in the name (authority)** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**,

- 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**”. 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 are in **Rome**, beloved of **God**, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from **God** our **Father** and the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

- **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 ... in **Antioch** the disciples were first called **Christians** (*Gk.5546- follower of Christ*).

- 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 no one is a **Jew** who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. **29** But a **Jew** is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the **Spirit**, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from **God**.

- 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 anyone is **in Christ**, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Gal 6:15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**. **16** And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the **Israel of God**.

- 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**.

Saints, Christians, Brethren

Mat 23:8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one Teacher, and you are all **brothers**. **9** And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, Who is in Heaven.

"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."

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. That said,

there are some areas where many of us may need to work on or may have some room for self-improvement.

The physical family.

- The one group that many of us have had and/or will have the most difficulty with, to get to sit down and study the **Bible**, has to be our individual families. And isn't it ironic how the same is true whether we've had good or bad relationships growing up together under one roof. They've known us since we were kids or we've known **them** as they grew up into adulthood to have personalities and attitudes all their own. Brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, how do we even begin to approach them with the fact that we've been called to a higher way of life and wish for them to be with us in this new existence? As a **Christian** parent I've wracked my brain over this more times than I can think. How many times have any of us apologized to our kids over mistakes made in the past only to hear them say "that's okay, it was in the past" and still disregard the life we now live as just a "phase grownups go through"? Even from those who may have once been faithful to **Christ**? Obviously, we can't give up on them but we need also to remember that we do have a spiritual family with which we should strive in fellowship to be holy. **Jesus** said it wasn't going to be easy.

Mat 10:34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. **35** For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. **36** And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. **37** Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. **38** And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.

- **Jesus'** words, have done and will continue to do what **He** stated they would in this passage, even though it was never **His** desire for these things to happen. But because some would reject the faith over the best wishes of their own flesh and blood who became faithful to **Christ**, there would always be such conflict between family members, believing and non-believing. But we who are "the called out" have also become members of a different family. When you think of adoption, for instance, what goes through your mind? A young, unmarried woman giving up a child out of desperation? What about the child and the adopting parents that take him/her in? Think of how much they may have wanted to have children of their own but couldn't and will give that love to someone else's child as though it was their own. Now think of "the called out". We have been adopted into the family of **God** through obedience to **His** will.

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the **God** and **Father** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, Who has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as **He** chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before **Him**. In love **5** **He** predestined us **for adoption** as sons **through Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of **His** will, **6** to the praise of **His** glorious grace, with which **He** has blessed us **in the Beloved** (*in Christ*).

Fellow employees.

- Another area we might need to work on is our relationship toward fellow employees. This is where there can be difficulty when a person comes out of the world and into the marvelous light of **Christ**. Some **Christians** may have, before converting, gone out with

their fellow employees after work to sip down a few beers at the local hangout. It was something they may have done for years. You weren't hurting anyone. Just taking it easy after a long day at work. But something changed. "You're no longer fun". They might even ask "does your church think fun is a sin?" or state "you're not the judge"! And even if you never say a word, your actions convicted them.

1Pe 4:3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the **Gentiles** want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. **4** With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign (*Gk.987- defame*) you; **5** but they will give account to **Him Who** is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Neighbors.

- They say "good fences make good neighbors". How many of us have neighbors that didn't know we've been "called out"? Like a physical fence, a **spiritual** fence is one that turns people away, keeps them off your property, makes you feel more secure. There are many ways we can get to know our neighbors but the first way is to pull down our spiritual fences, those barriers that keep us from going to them as much as they keep the neighbors from coming to us. Sometimes those spiritual fences exist as "silence", being afraid or even ashamed to let anyone know "I've been called out and I want to share it!"

Mar 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Other drivers on the road.

- Does the world know I'm part of "the called out" when I return the internationally known hand signal of greeting to an obnoxious person who greeted me in like manner first?

1Th 5:15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another **and to everyone**. (*...yes, even to the obnoxious drivers out there.*)

- Is my language different when I'm behind the wheel then, say, when I'm here in the assembly?

Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.

- Do I slam on the brakes when someone is following me too close? Do I speed up when someone is trying to speed around me? "Man, what kind of hurry are they in? Don't they know the speed limit?" Do I go the speed limit during rush hour when everyone wants to just get home? Remember, it's the law. Will **God** receive any glory from my time on the road?

Rom 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from **God**, and those that exist have been instituted by **God**. **2** Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what **God** has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ... **5** Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid **God's** wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

- And don't we all want to have "a good conscience toward God" (*1 Pet 3:21*)? How can we if we aren't continually striving to please Him in everything we do. True, some habits are difficult to give up, but nevertheless, we should not think they'll be excused if we aren't motivated enough by the price of our redemption to work hard at giving them up.

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 gave lists which are not to be considered all inclusive. 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 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, **10** nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And such **were** some of you. **But** you were washed, you were **sanctified**, you were **justified** in the name (*Gk.3686-authority*) of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

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 knowing 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 everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's (*authority*) sake, will receive a **hundredfold** and will inherit eternal life.

- 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 God 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 will never lack in anything. Trust me, I know as well do many other saints who have gone down similar or even worse roads than I have!

Heb 13:5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

- 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--just as you were called to **the one hope** that belongs to your call--

- 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*), love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

- The moment the **faithful** saint loses hope is the moment **Heaven** is no longer just an expectation, it is a reality. And speaking of the ultimate goal...

Php 3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of **God in Christ Jesus**.

“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 and meek of the earth as being a source of spiritual strength in making up the inhabitants of **His** kingdom.

1Co 1:26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But **God** chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; **God** chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 **God** chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of **God**.

- Whatever your position in life have you answered the gospel call to be saved yet?

Act 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on **His** name.'

Charli Yana
September 14, 2014

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