

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

EKKLESIA MEN

In the study on "**What Does *Kaleo* Mean?**" (Issue No. **SB087**), it was pointed out that, by the rule of usage in the New Testament, this word means to position, to appoint, to place, to name, or to designate – all these terms being synonymous, agreeing in the sense of declaring a person as being one's choice for an office or position. It was also shown that to call, summon, invite, and bid are secondary meanings.

Then, in the study on "**What Does *Ekklesia* Mean?**" (Issue No. **SB097**) it was shown that this word was formed by the addition of *ek* (out) to the verbal adjective *kletos*, and that this combination means *outpositioned*, also, that this word can be applied to any individual, company, or nation that has a position out of another. Individuals, companies, and even a nation such as this can be traced throughout the Bible. In considering these, the word *ekklesia* will be used as an English word, without italics, and will be spelled as in the Greek. This word is a participle; that is, a word that combines the characteristics of a verb with an adjective. It can correctly be parsed as a verbal adjective, and in Scripture is used as a noun.

The mysterious man Melchizedek, whose name means "my God is righteous," was a priest of the most high God (Heb. 7:1), and he was the king of Salem. His position, both as king and priest of that city-state, was out of God. Therefore we can truly say that he was an outpositioned or ekklesia man. See Gen. 14: 18-20.

The next ekklesia man we need to consider is Abraham. God said of him: "**He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live**" (Gen. 20:7). These words tell us that he was a "prophet-priest," and he was this because God declared it. His position was out of God. He functioned as such to Abimelech (Gen. 20:1-18). It is also clear that his position is a permanent one, and that he will function as such in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28, 29).

The divine position of Moses is easy to discern. He was a judge-priest in Israel (Exodus 18:15, 16), and he was truly an ekklesia man. At first he was alone in this, the only man in Israel with an official position out of God. However, this changed, and in Exo.18:18-24 we read of an arrangement, made at the suggestion of Jethro, that added about 80,000 men to the judges in Israel. This configuration, even though approved by God, still left too heavy a burden upon Moses, and at his complaint, God arranged to ease the burden (Num. 11:10-15 - See Issue No. **SB097**). These seventy men are actually called ekklesia in Acts 7:38, and are referred to as the body of Moses in Jude 1:9.

Aaron is an outstanding example of an ekklesia man. His position as the high priest of Israel was out of God. Of him it was said: "**And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called (*kaleo*) of God, as was Aaron**" (Heb. 5:4).

Many more such men could be cited. All the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had their positions out of God, and could be designated as ekklesia men in harmony with the way the Greeks used this term. The boy David was only a shepherd, but after his anointing to be king of Israel he had a position out of God. This position is a perpetual one. Death interrupted it but did not end it. David will again be the Shepherd-king of Israel in the day when God governs the nations of the earth. See Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Hosea 3:5.

It is, however, in the New Testament that the truth concerning ekklesia men shines forth clear and strong. The disciples of Christ were simply learners. They had no position out of Him. They were not ekklesia men individually and did not form an ekklesia collectively. However, at one point in His ministry, after a night of prayer, He called unto Him His disciples. Out of these He chose (elected) twelve, whom also He named apostles (Luke 6:12, 13).

The full significance of this action has long been ignored and stultified. The very fact that it followed a night of communion with the Father should denote its importance. In this action, Jesus Christ, who was God's apostle (Heb. 3:1), gave of Himself, even of His substance (essential nature) to these twelve men, resulting in each one becoming an outpositioned one, or an ekklesia man. Individually and personally they were an ekklesia, and collectively they became the ekklesia to all other disciples.

However, it should be noted that they could not be an ekklesia collectively unless each one was ekklesia personally. The United States Senate (a legislative ekklesia) is an example of this. It must be made up of a hundred men who individually are Senators, men whose positions are out of their states. You cannot become a senator by joining the senate, and you cannot form the senate by organizing a hundred ordinary men.

These twelve men at this point became the foundational ecclesia, the very rock upon which the Lord declared He would build of Himself the ekklesia. The presence of Judas among these creates no problem. The Lord will do the cleansing work that eliminated Judas, even as He will purge all others that should be eliminated before He presents it to Himself as a glorious ekklesia, not having spot, wrinkle, or blemish. See Eph. 5:25,27.

The multitude of Israelites who became disciples of the Lord Jesus certainly required that there be men with a position out of Christ in order to handle all the complex matters that would arise among them. The actual functioning of this ekklesia in the days of our Lord on earth is clearly set forth in Matt. 18:15-20. The context shows that these words were spoken to the larger company of the disciples in the presence of the twelve. They had come to ask a question, and to His answer the Lord added the following words: **"Moreover, if thy brother (a fellow disciple) shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: and if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother, but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established"**(Matt. 18:15-16).

Two steps are presented in this passage. If the first one produced no result, it then became a legal matter and the second step should provide witnesses so the matter can be properly presented to the ecclesia. As believers, living in and under God's administration of grace, we can take the first step if we so desire, but we cannot righteously take the second step. If the first fails, then we can only fall back on the directive given in Eph. 4:32: **"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, dealing graciously (*charizomai*) one with another, even as God also in Christ deals graciously (*charizomai*) with you."**

However, among the disciples in the time of our Lord it was a different matter. If the first two steps failed to produce the desired result, then the offended one with his witnesses was to tell it to the ekklesia, men with a position out of Christ who could bind or loose a matter upon earth and it would be bound or loosed in heaven. If the offender refused to hear the ekklesia, then he was to be treated as a man of the nations and a tax-gatherer (Matt. 18:17). Scofield's statement that this passage deals with "Discipline in the future church" is a theological absurdity.

It should be carefully noted here that the whole twelve did not need to be present in order to deal with such matters. In this context the Lord declared that if any two of them agreed on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them (Matt. 18:19). Two apostles made a quorum. Our Lord emphasized this by saying: **"For where two or three are gathered in My name (under My authority) there am I in the midst of them"** (Matt. 18:20).

For anyone to take the two statements cited above and apply or relate them to prayer or to meetings where the attendance is small is a misappropriation, a misapplication, and an abuse of Scripture to the nth degree and should be branded as theological japery. Let there be no misunderstanding. There was during the Lord's earthly ministry a band of twelve men who were individually ecclesia men, and who were collectively the Lord's ecclesia, and they functioned as such. Anyone who received these men as Christ's commissioned ones (apostles) also received the Lord Jesus (Matt. 10:40).

The word *ekklesia* must not be restricted to divine positions and appointments. If one had a position out of another, the word *ekklesia* could be used of him. When we read: "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward" (Luke 16:1) it is evident that this steward's position was out of the rich man, who had delegated to him some of his own power and authority. Therefore, this steward was an outpositioned man and could be described as *ekklesia*. From this it becomes apparent that Paul's greeting to the *ekklesia* that was in Philemon's house (Phm. 1:2) was to his administrator, an individual who was a part of his household. In Acts 19:32,39, and 41 we find the Greek word *ekklesia* three times. It is translated "assembly" in all these occurrences, and this would not be a bad translation if we understand what an assembly is. This was a legislative and judicial assembly, and all such must be composed of assemblymen.

All members of the California State Assembly must have a position out of the district that elects them. They form a legislative assembly which meets at certain stated times, or when called into session by the governor. If they should meet on their own volition, it would not be a legal assembly. No group of men can get together and organize an assembly. An assembly must be organized out of assemblymen, even as an *ekklesia* must be composed of *ekklesia* men.

In my own opinion the word *ekklesia* reaches its highest peak when it is used of Jesus Christ. This is found in Ephesians 3: 10. The position of Jesus Christ is out of God. He is the preeminent outpositioned One. It is through Him that the manifold wisdom of God is now being made known to the sovereignties and authorities among the most elevated. To Him belongs such a task and the glory of it.

End Issue No. SB115

