

SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-05-06—CALLED OUT ONES

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

I recently wrote about the Greek word *ekklesia*¹, which is a compound of two Greek words: *ek* (*out*) and *kaleo* (*called*). It is almost universally (but incorrectly) translated *church* (inferring a building or organization) in English bibles. But putting that aside, I think the word itself is one of the most unique and amazing words in all of the Word of God. Notice the first occurrence found in Matthew and used by Jesus Christ:

MATTHEW 16:18 And I say also to you, that you are Peter; but upon this Rock I will **build My church [ekklesia = called out ones]**, and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against it.

This is a very meaningful scripture for several reasons. First of all, Jesus said God’s children are “**My** Called Out Ones.” We belong to Jesus Christ who said of all God’s children, “I **kept** them [*the disciples*] in Your name. I **protected** those whom You [*God the Father*] have given Me, and not one of them has perished.” (John 17:12). God the Father gave Jesus Christ the responsibility for keeping and protecting His children. We belong to Jesus Christ because He was the ransom for our lives².

Something else to consider in this verse. The last word *it*, which points back to *ekklesia*, is translated from the Greek common pronoun *auto*. However, *ekklesia* refers to living human beings—God’s **children**—so the Greek word *auto* should not be translated *it*, but *them*. This gives an entirely different emphasis in the last phrase, “and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against **[them]**,” and now Jesus no longer sounds like He is referring to a church building or human organization but to living, breathing people AND He is their **protector**. Even so, *them* is still not quite correct.

All pronouns must match the gender of the referenced noun in both Greek and English. *Ekklesia* is feminine; therefore, *auto* should not be translated *it* or *them* but instead should be *her*: “and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against **[her]**.” God’s people are the feminine *ekklesia*—the Called Out Ones—because SHE is to be the **bride** of His Son³. *Bride* is always feminine and it is no coincidence that *ekklesia* is not neuter or masculine since it refers to the bride of Christ!

Finally, take a look at the word *build*. It is from the Greek verb *oikodomeo*, a compound of *oikos* (meaning dwelling, family, or household) and *doma* (meaning edifice or roof). This compound word literally describes a covering (*doma*) over a family or household (*oikos*). The phrase “**build My church**” implies the construction of a physical building

¹ Sabbath Thought 2023-02-25 – Ekklesia of God (<https://sabbathreflections.org/2023-02-25-ekklesia-of-god/>).

² Matt. 20:28.

³ Rev. 21:9; et al.

but *oikodomeo* means to *build up* or *edify* when referring to the *ekklesia*. This is evident in the other two scriptures that talk about *oikodomeo* in reference to the *ekklesia*. They both emphasize edification, not constructing a building:

ACTS 9:31 Then the **churches [ekklesia]** throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace indeed. *And they [the ekklesia] increased, being **edified [oikodomeo]** and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.*

1 CORINTHIANS 14:4 The one who speaks in an *unknown* language is edifying *only* himself; but the one who prophesies is **edifying [oikodomeo] the church [ekklesia]**.

The beauty of the phrase “upon this Rock I will build-up/edify My Called Out Ones” is unmistakable. Along with the literal meaning of the Greek, it brings to mind Christ dwelling in His people (household of God⁴), protecting God’s children (Rock and Fortress⁵), atoning/covering us with His sacrificial blood (roof or edifice⁶), and preparing (edifying or building up) the Called Out Ones. The latter brings to mind the verse in Revelation 21:2 where the saints are “**prepared** as a **bride** adorned for her husband.” So, Jesus Christ dwells in His Called Out Ones⁷ and is the Rock that covers and protects them. He is edifying, building up, and preparing His Bride. When we put all of this together, the verse now reads:

MATTHEW 16:18 And I say also to you, that you are Peter; but upon this Rock I will **edify, build up, and prepare** My **[Called Out Ones]**, and *the gates of the grave shall not prevail against [her]*.

Does this not give a much deeper meaning and appreciation of our Lord and Savior’s role in our lives? It emphasizes Jesus Christ dwells in God’s children to edify and build us up, cover and protect us, and prepare His Bride in the fullness of His love for us.

However, none of this addresses the fact that *ekklesia* is an unusual word by itself. “Called Out Ones” is not a name or title anyone would use to describe a group of people in a normal conversation. I wonder if it even existed prior to Jesus using it in Matthew 16:18. And while it is a noun, it also infers a past action—a calling out from some place. If you think about it, many (if not all) of God’s people mentioned in the Bible have been called out from some place in this world. The list of names includes Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, Jeremiah, the ancient Israelites, and many others. They all left someplace when called by God. The same is true for us even though most of us did not physically go anywhere. Satan is still the ruler of the earth, even though he has been

⁴ Eph. 2:19.

⁵ Ps. 18:2.

⁶ Atonement in Hebrew (*kaphar*) means to cover.

⁷ Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil 2:5.

judged⁸ and rejected⁹ and we are awaiting the return of the King who now wears the crown¹⁰. The *ekklesia*, in most cases, are not called out of a place but to come out of Satan's world:

JOHN 15:19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but **I have personally chosen you out of the world**, the world hates you for this.

JOHN 17:6 I [*Jesus Christ*] have manifested Your name [*God the Father's*] to the men whom **You have given Me out of the world**. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word.

This world is an accumulation of Satan's wickedness. There is no love in him. If words could describe his odious and depraved evil ways, they might include hate, envy, jealousy, lust, greed, guile, hypocrisy, etc. He is so wicked that it is difficult to describe him by a single word, but one might be *malice*¹¹. A friend once pointed out the depths of the terrible wickedness behind the meaning of *malice*—it literally means a DESIRE OR LUST TO DO EVIL. Malice is spite, hatred, bitterness, enmity, cruelty, nastiness, venom, viciousness, etc.—it is absolute wickedness. It produces evil works that are ungodly, unholy, profane, blasphemous, atrocious, abominable, diabolical, fiendish, barbarous, horrible, heinous, depraved, etc. Because this is Satan's world, the world is filled with malice. It is no way of life for the Called Out Ones because agape love cannot coexist with malice, so we must come out of this world.

But if we leave one place we logically must *go* somewhere else. We are called out of the ways of this world to put on God's way of life! Obviously, we are not there yet, but the end of our journey OUT of this world will be INTO God's Kingdom. At baptism, we relinquished and rejected our citizenship under Satan and pledged an oath to God but we have not yet reached our destination. Paul said:

EPHESIANS 2:19 So then, you are no longer aliens and foreigners; but **you are fellow citizens [Gk. *sumpolites*]** with the saints, and **are of the household [Gk. *oikeios*] of God [in heaven]**.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20 For **our citizenship [Gk. *politeuma*] is in heaven**; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

(Note that *household* in Ephesians 2:19 is the Greek word *oikeios*, a form of *oiko* in *oikodomeo* used in Matthew 16:18.) This is a spiritual and mental journey. We are, as Paul said when describing the people of God who came before us:

⁸ John 16:10.

⁹ John 12:31.

¹⁰ 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16.

¹¹ Gk. *kakia* (G2549)—Matt. 6:34; Acts 8:22; Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:8; 14:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Titus 3:3; Jas. 1:21; 1 Pet 2:1, 16.

HEBREWS 11:13 All these [*Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, etc.*] died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar, and having been persuaded of *them*, and having embraced *them*, and having confessed that they were **strangers and sojourners** [*KJV = pilgrims*] on the earth.

The literal meaning for the Greek word behind *sojourner* is “resident alien.” Our journey is not a physical one, so we still must continue in this physical life but as spiritual resident aliens—we must live in this physical world but we are no longer citizens of it and the ways of Satan.

I apologize for all the Greek words, but I wanted to emphasize the underlying meaning and beauty of these scriptures that is not apparent in English. We are the Called Out Ones by God our Father¹². To be a part of the Called Out Ones is the greatest offering given to flesh and blood. Having the covering of Christ’s blood for our sins is humbling. We can stake our lives on our protector, Jesus Christ, who is our Rock and Fortress. To be established in the Household of God is eternal life. Jesus Christ is preparing us to be His Bride, which is a blessing above anything this world could offer. No angel can attain unto that nor will they ever be of the Bride of Jesus Christ.

The Day of Trumpets, Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles picture events at the end of this age and the great harvest of mankind. But prior to these days is the return of Jesus Christ when the Called Out Ones receive eternal life and are presented before God the Father who gives each a new name¹³. Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost are the holydays that pertain directly to the *ekklesia*. Passover is the new covenant established by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures being **called out** of this world, and Pentecost is early harvest of the firstfruits—the Called Out Ones. Pentecost is when the work in the Called Out Ones is completed. It is the completion of our journey out of this world and into the Kingdom of God. In that day, we will be made pillars in the temple that **is** God the Father and Jesus Christ¹⁴!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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¹² John 6:44.

¹³ Rev. 2:17; 3:5, 12; 14:1.

¹⁴ Rev. 21:22.