

Episode #1103 What Does Ekklesia Mean?

I. One last stop on our preparatory journey to the exposition of the book of Acts: I find it essential to bring a study on what does ekklesia mean?

II. This is a Greek word, e-k-k-l-e-s-i-a, but when we bring this Greek word into English it has become ecclesia. We often hear it mispronounced, but in the Greek the accent would be shoved as far forward as possible, and we are pronouncing it the Greek way.

III. What Does Ekklesia Mean?

- A. It might seem strange in this day that this question should be asked, yet it needs to be asked more fervently than ever before. The so-called Christian world possesses very little truth as to the actual meaning and the actual significance of this word.
- B. Matthew. Upon this rock I will build my ekklesia. The Christian world simply does not know what the Lord meant. They are simply satisfied to translate this word as meaning church, and then go on to explain that church means organized religion as we see it throughout the Western world today. That simply cannot be the truth.
- C. As a result of my own studies, I have a deep conviction that the word ekklesia has nothing at all to do with anything at all that travels under the name of church today.
- D. Some might misconstrue my words as being an attack against the church, or that which is called the church. In reality, my words are simply a denial of the false claims of many so-called churches. There is nothing in the Word of God that requires us to accept without question every claim of every church. In reality, what the Word of God requires us to do is to bring to the test of Divine truth any claim of any church and every claim of every church that it might be tested by God's Word.
- E. If the word ekklesia has no important meaning or signifies very little or signifies nothing, then almost anyone or everyone can claim to be ekklesia today. They will translate it by the word church, and if this means nothing more than church and church means nothing more than organized religion, than anyone who is a part of any organized religion can say, "I am a member of the church." But if this word actually means something, if this word has great significance, then we might be living under false pretenses if we claim to be ekklesia or anything that might be related to that word today.
- F. In view of this, most people will want to make this word to mean as little as possible, for if they make this word to mean as little as possible then they can claim that they are it. They will struggle to minimize and depreciate the glorious position and the privileges of those of the Acts period who were called the ekklesia at that time. They will minimize all of that. Then they will try to exalt all that they call church today in order to make these two be the same. That is not correct.
- G. I have often said that the meaning of any word in the Bible must be obtained from its use. This is also true of the words of men. For example, pen, a small enclosure for animals, merely because people use it that way. Since they also use these same three letters for an instrument for writing with ink, it also means that. Even when we coin new words, the meaning must be established from the way in which we use them.
- H. The meaning of Biblical words must be established from the way they are used in the pages of God's Book. If we do not establish the meaning of God's words by His Own use of them, then we must assume responsibility for making these words to mean

what we decide they shall mean. The meaning of God's words can only truly be fixed by their use in Scripture.

- I. We are told on every hand that ekklesia is formed from two elements, the first being ek, which means out, and kaleo, which we are told means to call. That is right and that is the truth, and that can be depended upon. There can be no honest dispute or argument as to the basic elements in this word.
 - J. However, as is often the case, right here men seem to hit a derail in their thinking. Having established one fact, then they go on to misinterpret that fact. The next question should be: if kaleo means to call, then what does to call mean? The usual answer is, everyone knows what to call means. It means to invite, to bid, or to summon. That is true, and consulting the dictionary will back that up. However, out of the 146 occurrences of kaleo in the New Testament, I can show you at least 100 occurrences where it cannot possibly mean to invite, to bid, or to summon. Note the significance of that! More than 2/3 can be pointed out where it would be utterly impossible for this to mean to invite, to bid, or to summon.
 - K. Therefore, if in 2/3 of its occurrences it cannot mean this, we must face up to the fact that kaleo can have some other significance than to invite, to bid, or to summons.
- IV. Ten passages from Luke 1 that use kaleo that cannot mean to invite, bid, or summons.
- A. Luke 1:13. Call his name John. Could you insert the idea of bid, invite, or summons?
 - B. Luke 1:31. Call His name Jesus. Call is kaleo. Invite or summon or bid?
 - C. Luke 1:32. Called the Son of the Highest. Invite or bid?
 - D. Luke 1:35. Called the Son of God. Invite or bid or summon?
 - E. Luke 1:36. Called barren. Invited or bid or summoned? No! Designated.
 - F. Luke 1:59. Called him by the name of his father. You could not insert these ideas!
 - G. Luke 1:60. He shall be called John.
 - H. Luke 1:61. Called by this name.
 - I. Luke 1:62. What he would have him called.
 - J. Luke 1:76. Called the prophet of the highest. Invited, bid, or summoned? No!
 - K. From these you get the clear proof that the word kaleo is used in many cases, and I have pointed out 10 in one chapter and I believe I could point out 90 more, making 100, where kaleo could not possibly be translated to invite, to bid, or to summons.
- V. Eleven passages from Luke 14 where kaleo does mean to invite, to bid, or to summons.
- A. Luke 14:7. Those that were invited. Invited is kaleo.
 - B. Luke 14:8. When you are invited by anyone. Kaleo. Go down a little bit.
 - C. Luke 14:8. Lest one more honorable than you be invited.
 - D. Luke 14:9. He who invited you come and say.
 - E. Luke 14:10. But when you are invited.
 - F. Luke 14:10. When he who invited you.
 - G. Luke 14:12. To him who invited Him.
 - H. Luke 14:13. Invite the poor.
 - I. Luke 14:16. And invited many.
 - J. Luke 14:17. To those who were invited.
 - K. Luke 14:24. None of those men who were invited.
 - L. We have here 21 passages all together, 10 from Luke 1 and 11 from Luke 14, they give the most positive proof that kaleo does mean to invite, and yet it is used in places where invite will not fit. Yet I have seen lexicons that give only one definition of this

word, declaring that it means, “To call those within range of the voice for immediate action, or to invite those at a distance for a future occasion.” Now that is certainly true, but that is only true in 1/3 of its occurrences. In 2/3 of its occurrences that cannot be true, and it does not mean either one of those things, either calling those in range of the voice for immediate action or invite those at a distance for a future occasion.

VI. Further consideration of the word kaleo.

- A. It is quite evident that the Greek could say things with kaleo that we cannot say with our word call. We can say, “The President has not yet called the Secretary of State.” Or, we could say, “The President has not yet named the Secretary of State.” These two sentences set before us two different ideas, as indicated by the verbs call and name. We need two words, and those two words express two different ideas. Yet the Greek could do it all by one word, kaleo. When he said, “The President has not yet called the Secretary of State,” he would mean he has not yet named him, invited him, he has not yet designated him. Our word call never means to appoint or to designate in the sense of declaring to be one’s choice for filling a position or an office.
- B. When this meaning of kaleo is recognized, it makes possible an understanding of the adjective kletos, and the participle klesis, both of which are derived from the verb.
- C. This will shed light on many passages.
 1. Romans 1:1 has always given translators a great deal of difficulty. When you read the expositors on this, they don’t seem to know what to do with it. (Read) Called to be an apostle. This makes it read as if he were invited or summoned to be an apostle. But here called does not mean to summon or to invite, but it means he was named an apostle. Literally, as it has been set forth by some expositors, this should be translated “a called apostle,” a designated apostle, a named apostle, one who was positioned as an apostle.
 2. Romans 1:6. The called of Jesus Christ. Does this just mean that they were invited or summoned? No! It means they are the appointed ones of Jesus Christ, that they are the designated ones of Jesus Christ.
 3. Romans 1:7. Called to be saints. Notice that the words “to be” are in italics. These people were not called to be saints, they were saints, already addressed as such. They were positioned as saints, designated as saints. The hallowed ones, set apart for very special service.
 4. Romans 8:28 often gives a great deal of difficulty. We could come to a much better understanding and appreciation of the truth. (Read) To those who are the called according to His purpose. They take this to mean invited or summoned, but that is not what it means. This is true of those who were the called, the designated, named, or appointed, according to His purpose. These were the outcalled of God in the Acts period. Everything worked together for them, who were the called according to His purpose.
 5. Romans 8:29-30. Those whom He predestined, whom He did determine in advance, these He also called, named, positioned. This does not have to do with every believer of today, but with those positioned men, those who were called during the Acts period.
 6. I Corinthians 1:1. Paul, a called apostle. Here, in his marginal notes, Schofield makes a correction and says this actually means a called apostle. This does not

mean he was invited or summoned: he was named, actually appointed, by Jesus Christ, not of men or by men, to be a commissioned-one of God.

7. I Corinthians 1:2. To the outcalled of God which is at Corinth. Called saints. Not called to be saint, but those who were positioned as saints, who were considered as hallowed by God for very special service.
8. I Corinthians 1:24. To those who are called. That doesn't mean they were invited or summoned. They were positioned. Both Jews and Greeks had this position he has already spoken about.
9. Revelation 17:14. An interesting occurrence of this word. Those who are with Him are called, elected, and faithful. They are named, they are appointed, they are positioned, and they are elected, and they are faithful. These three things.

VII. Conclusion. Knowing this meaning of *kaleo* helps us a great deal in understanding the Word of God.