

The Church – A Called Out People

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By Neil Buckman

Let us read from Mathew's gospel, chapter 16 verses 15 to 16: *And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you Simon, Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it."*

Prayer: Father, we ask again - we need Your anointing for speaking, translating and hearing Your Word. Our hands are empty. Our hearts are lifted up to You and we rejoice in Your faithfulness. You are faithful. You love Your own and You feed Your sheep. Amen.

Ekklesia - Church

The passage we have read is very familiar to us. The Lord Jesus said, "On this rock I will build My church." Peter had a revelation of who the Lord Jesus is. He said, "You are the Christ." That identifies Him as the One who has been sent, but in addition to that he said, "You are the Son of the living God". And the Lord said, "On this rock I will build My church." Now the interesting thing is that none of the apostles turned around to the Lord and asked, "What is the church? You said I will build My church." They thought they knew what He meant. They felt they understood because this word translated *church* (in Greek, *ekklesia*) was not a religious word. When the disciples heard this word, they felt that they understood what He meant because it was a common word.

We understand the word also. It means a company of people who are separated, called out. So Peter probably felt, "Well, yes, that's us. We have left our families and jobs and are following the Lord Jesus. We are this *Ekklesia*. We have been called out." We understand why he would think that way. And if this is what he was thinking it was obviously true.

Even today, when people think about *Ekklesia*, this called out company, they could have their own ideas about what this means. "We are separated from other people. We have a different understanding from other people. So, we are separate. We are morally separate, because we live a good life. Other people don't live a life like us." So this is the understanding we could have about **Ek-klesia**. *Ekklesia* is made up by two words. That first word, **Ek**, means out and we need to understand what **Ek** means because we see the word *Ekklesia* elsewhere in the Scripture where it is not referring to Christians at all.

History of Israel – the beginning with Abraham

But here is Peter and here are the other disciples hearing the Lord say, "I will build my *Ekklesia*." Maybe if they had stopped and thought for a moment, they would have realized

something. They would have said, "Well, we are Jewish. We have a long history with the Lord." They could look back on their long history. They could go back and go through the prophets, David and Solomon. They could go back to Moses and they could go back to Abraham. They would understand that the Jewish nation began with Abraham. God did not **choose** a nation - He **created** a nation. He began that nation with Abraham.

There is a very helpful principle when reading the Scripture. This principle is that if you want to understand something, go to the beginning of the thing. If Peter had thought for a moment and gone back and back and back and back to Abraham what would he have seen? If he had gone right to the beginning with Abraham, he would have seen that the very first thing that the Lord spoke to Abraham was, "Get out!" "Get out of your land, get out of your family, get out of everything that is familiar to you." So, the beginning of everything for the Jewish people was "*Get out*". This is very significant.

If we look at the history of Israel, the problems arose when they did not separate themselves or "get out". But let us follow Israel from the beginning - the first things concern Abraham. Abraham comes home. He speaks to his wife. He says, "God spoke to me. He said He is going to bless me. He is going to make me a blessing. All the families of the earth are going to be blessed. Isn't that wonderful?" And Sarah says, "Yes, it is wonderful. But is that all He said?" "Oh! No. There is one more thing. He said '*Get out*'. We very much want is this blessing from God, but maybe we can have the blessing here. Maybe we don't need to get out."

What do you think would have happened if they had talked like that? Nothing. God would not fulfil His promise until they got out. Abraham did get out. It was a long and difficult journey. But eventually he came to the land wherein he was a stranger.

History of Israel - captivity in Egypt

If we follow the history of Israel, we can follow through to the time they go down to Egypt. After 400 hundreds they come out of Egypt. Moses leads them to the land that Abraham had had to go to. But it turns out to be a very long journey. It should have been a short journey. But it became a forty year journey because they were not ready to "get out". They said, "Let us go back." But the promise was only for the land to which they were going.

History of Israel - into Canaan

So, eventually the Lord was able to bring them into the land. There was a great conflict. After many years finally there was a king and there was a kingdom.

Of course they started with the wrong king. They started with a strong, tall and a good looking man. But that was no good. They needed the boy whom God had chosen. So God finally had a king who was after His own heart.

This king fought many battles. But at the end of his life, a small thought came into his heart. He said, "Why do I have such a palace and God has nothing?" That little thought was what

God was waiting for. We remember what God said to David: “You will not build it, but your son will build the House for Me.” But David spent the rest of his life preparing with all his heart for the House of God.

His son, Solomon, was put upon the throne for this purpose - to build the House. We remember when Solomon dedicated the house he sacrificed 120,000 sheep and I think 23,000 cattle. A massive sacrifice to dedicate this House! Then the glory of the Lord filled the House. Nobody could enter in. The house was for God and God’s glory filled the House.

History of Israel - exile and return

But the history is not finished, is it? After this, Israel defiled the House and they were driven out of the land - God brought their enemies upon them. But there were some with their hearts still for Him. We see Daniel on his knees at his open window. And which way was he looking? He was looking to Jerusalem - because his heart was for the House. “This is what God wants. This is what I want.” That was his prayer and repentance. God brought them back to the land. They began to rebuild that House. They began with the altar. They rebuilt the house and they rebuilt Jerusalem.

The House

It is a big story. It is a long history over many years. So much suffering! So much bloodshed! And all of it is focused, at the end, on this House.

We begin with Abraham. We come to Moses and we see the nation brought out of captivity. Why were they brought out? They were brought out to be brought in. Why were they brought into the land? Because in this land there was to be a kingdom, and there was to be a king reigning over this kingdom. Why was the king there? The king was there to build the House.

He brought them out, to bring them in, to establish a kingdom, so that a king should reign, so that the House should be built – and that House was for God. That is the Old Testament history.

History of Israel - New Testament Reality

We now come to the New Testament. We think, “Wait a minute, something is missing.”

In the Old Testament there was the Land. It was so important. Nothing could happen if you were not in the Land. God said, “Here, here and here only.” The land was so important. We come to the New Testament. Where is the Land? Nobody is talking about the Land.

We come to the Old Testament and we see that the House is so important. Everything was focused upon this House. We come to the New Testament. It is hardly mentioned.

All the things that were so important in the Old Testament seem to have gone. Modern Christians have an answer for this. They say that the Old Testament is not relevant anymore. No! No! No!

What do we see in the Old Testament? Pictures! Pictures of what? In Europe, one day, I went into a big cathedral. At the entrance was a sign which read: "This is the House of God. Don't take pictures." No! No! No! That is not it. These things in the Old Testament are pictures. But, where is the reality? The reality is in the Heavens. The Land and the House were earthly pictures of something which is of the Spirit. They were things which existed in time and space, but the reality is eternal. These were pictures of what was on God's heart, but the reality is much more than these pictures.

Even Solomon sensed that. He did not understand it, but when he dedicated the House he said, "The heaven of heavens cannot contain You, how much less this House that I have built!"

But people began to understand this and these hidden mysteries were revealed to Paul and to others. Can you think of somebody else who might have seen this? Perhaps Stephen, a man full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit! When they attacked Stephen they said, "He was talking about this temple, this House, being destroyed." It was as if, when Satan saw Stephen, he left the apostles and said, "Go for him! He has seen what is on God's heart! Quickly get rid of Stephen." When Stephen was condemned, he told the story of Israel. At the end of the story he said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Where is the House that you will build for me?'" They wanted to kill him after they heard that. Well Satan succeeded, did he not? He crushed Stephen. But who is standing by? Paul! And after that Paul was kicking against the goads because he saw how that man died. Satan became God's servant.

Old Testament Pictures

So, we see the earthly first and then the heavenly reality. We see Abraham in the very beginning. We see the very first words, "Get out. Not here Abraham. Somewhere else! Will you come with me? Will you come to the other place? If you will come to the other place, there I will bless you. There I will make your name great. And there all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Passover

Let us go back again. Let us go back to Egypt. Now we are the people of God and slaves in Egypt. We are crying out to God to deliver us. We are His chosen people. But we are not where we should be. We should be in that land. But we are slaves here. We are trapped here. There is no escape. So we call out to God. God hears us. God sends Moses. He saves the people out of Egypt. How did he save them? He saved them by the blood of the lamb.

We remember this, and Israel was told to always remember this. "Remember this night. This is the night you will be set free. You will be set free through the blood of the lamb." How are they going to remember this Passover night? So the Lord said, "Do this. On the tenth day of

this month choose a lamb. Then on the fourteenth day of this month kill the lamb. Then put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts.” Then what? Then the lamb became a meal. The lamb was roasted. There were very strict instructions! They were to eat the lamb. How would they eat it? They would have to eat it with their staff in their hands, their shoes on their feet, and they had to eat it quickly. That’s a very strange meal.

When we have a meal we like to take our shoes off, we like to sit down, we like to relax, and then we can have a slow and pleasant meal. But this was not that sort of a meal. When they ate this meal, they ate it standing up. The Lord said everybody was to be dressed and ready to leave. And He says, “Now you eat.” You can see what the Lord is saying. “Here is a meal. But this meal is your departure.” So for many generations the Jewish people have continued to eat this meal every year. All the family gathers - nobody is left out. There is the father and the mother, maybe grandfather, grandmother, children, grandchildren. The whole family is there. Together they eat this meal. On each occasion they recite the story of what happened on that night.

New Testament Reality

Now centuries have passed. The Lord Jesus is come. The Lord Jesus is gathered with His twelve apostles. It is Passover. They have prepared the meal. This was not His family, in the sense that it was not his mother and brothers, but this was family to Him. He said, “I have longed to eat this Passover with you.” And then He said, “Before it is fulfilled.” So the Lord Jesus celebrated the Passover with His apostles. But they did not understand what He meant. “What do you mean ‘fulfilled’?” For them the event was in the past - they were remembering something that was past. But the Lord was saying to them, “No! No! No! That was a great event for you but that was just a picture. This Passover must be fulfilled.”

Now we don’t forget it, do we? What is the Passover? How did they eat the Passover? You can’t eat Passover without thinking, “I am leaving”. We are not to think, “Well, there was a Passover and now the Lord Jesus has died to forgive me.” That is very good and now I am blessed. But we easily forget that the Passover is the departure.

“Abraham, get out!” “Passover - get out!” And to the land in both cases! To the land! When we think of the Passover we have to feel that.

Passover - Exodus

Now many people feel that there is something a little bit wrong with the way the Passover was fulfilled. The Lord Jesus is that lamb. They were sacrificing the lamb on that day... but the Lord Jesus died the next day. It would have been good if He had died on the same day that they were sacrificing the lamb, because then we could say, “You see, you see, just when they are sacrificing the lamb that’s when the Lord Jesus died.” But he did not do that. Why did he not do that? He could have done that. But he did not do that. We would say, “Ah! The Lord Jesus died. That’s when the Lamb died. Then **after that** we go out.” But he did not do that.

The lamb died and we know that speaks of the Lord Jesus. But when He died what was happening in terms of the original Passover? Think about it. The night before they killed the lamb - what happened the next day? On the next day they all marched out of Egypt. So we look at the lamb being sacrificed and we know this speaks of the Lord Jesus. But when we look at the Lord Jesus upon the Cross what should we see? Exodus! Departure! Leaving! Walking out!

It is not our leaving **after** He has died. It is our leaving **in that death**. You see? Not that we are doing something, but we are in Him.

At that last Passover they would normally have recited the story what had happened in Egypt. The Lord Jesus departed from that tradition. He was at the head of the table and as the host He took the bread and broke it and gave thanks and then He passed it to them and said, "Eat. This is My body broken for you."

Now I don't know why for some reason we listen to that regularly read to us and then we just say, "OK". What we should say is, "What? What on earth you mean?" We say this bread which is broken is His body broken for us. So it would make more sense if I took the bread and I broke it and said, "Come and look. Just look and remember Him, because He died for you. His body was broken for you. Come and look and weep." But that is not what He said to do is it? He said, "Take and eat." Is it not strange? Did he want us to weep because He had died? If so He would not have said, "Eat." What was He saying to them?

Let us pause for a moment and consider. This is happening at the end of His life among us. The Lord Jesus would leave them very soon. Already the twelve are feeling like children whose parents have deserted them. They feel they are orphans. He said, "I am leaving you." Fear filled their hearts. They felt so small. "What we are going to do? If you are not with us what is going to happen?" Then the Lord said, "If you love me, rejoice." They could not understand that. "How could we possibly rejoice if You are not going to be with us, if You are going to leave us?" He knew their thoughts. Very soon they will see Him no more. They would be in this world. What would they have? Nothing but a calling! A calling! And that calling is a Heavenly calling.

One life

He would open their understanding. They would see that all the history they looked back on had a spiritual fulfilment. And the Lord Jesus, out of sight, would be glorified in Heaven. This is the position they are going to be in. The Lord Jesus knew how they would feel and He knew what the calling was. So he said, "Take, eat. Do this in remembrance of Me." Those sitting around the table looked at each other. Each one took some of the loaf of bread and ate. What was the Lord Jesus saying? What did He leave for them? It was as if He was saying, "I am going away. But I am going to give you something before I go. This is going to be very helpful for you. You need this." He gave them this bread. He said, "Eat." What was the message? "I have died. I have risen. I am your life."

We take that bread. We don't just look at it – it's no good looking at it. We eat it. We remember He lives. He is my life. He is my food. He is the living One.

He is my life. The early believers sat around the table. There was one loaf and each took a part. An experienced man of God took a part, a little child, new to the faith, took a part of this same loaf, a poor woman who was a slave also took a part of the same loaf, a rich merchant also took a part of the same loaf. One Life, and they all shared it.

Now here is a strange thought. When they had finished, where was the bread? They looked around upon one another. All over the world, in every place, wherever the believers are, one bread, one Life. Everybody is sharing one Life. And what a Life!

New Covenant

Then when the Passover meal was finished they drank wine. There were 3 occasions in the Passover when they drank the cup. When He took up the cup on the last occasion which they called the "Cup of Blessing" He said, "All of you drink from this cup." What is this cup? If you ask many people what the cup represents, they say the cup represents the blood of Christ which He shed for us. My answer is **No**, it does not. The cup represents the **New Covenant** in His blood. It is a covenant. It is a promise that God has made. We know this Covenant is spoken of in Hebrews 8:8. A promise had been given to Israel many years before that there would be a new covenant. Now the Lord Jesus has said that He has made a New Covenant. "I have made this New Covenant and I have made it in my blood." But what is the New Covenant?

We read of it in Hebrews 8:10-12. "For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'"

This is the covenant that is represented in this cup. The covenant says, "I will transform you. I will put my laws into your mind. And I will write them on your heart." It does not mean that we memorise something, rather it means that the righteousness of God becomes a part of us. You shall not teach everyone to know the Lord because we have an inner knowledge of Him. There is a complete change, a complete transformation. The Lord says, "I will be their God and they shall be my people." You may say, "But He was already their God and they were already His people". But this is something new. The Lord is now able to love them freely because their sins are washed away.

In the Old Testament under the first covenant, it was *if you* - if you keep my commandments. So, two words sum up the old covenant: *If you*. There are two new words which would sum up the New Covenant. We see them here. *I will. I will, I will*. It is His work, something that He is doing, something that He is accomplishing.

So the cup was passed from the one, to the next, to the next. And each one drank of that cup. They were saying, "I am a partaker of this New Covenant. I am joined to the Lord. I belong to Him. Which cup did you drink of? I drank of the same cup. Which cup did you

drink of? I drank the same cup.” The same grace, the same love, the same mercy, the same Heavenly calling, the same mission, the same Lord. No difference.

One bread, one cup and one glorified Lord.

So when the Lord Jesus departed and the believers were gathered together, they sat down to this meal. They saw the bread on the table. They saw the cup. They might say, “Who put that there?” The Lord Jesus did. He left it there for us because He knows what it is to live in this world. He knows it is hard. He knows we really want to see Him but we cannot see Him, we really want to hear Him but we cannot (with our ears). He knows that He has called us to something that is invisible, to a Heavenly calling, to partake of the Heavenly mysteries. So he left something behind. He said, “Take and eat. As sure as this bread is in your mouth, so I am your life. As sure as you hold that cup and drink from it I am bound to you by an everlasting covenant. I will never leave you or forsake you.”

But this is only temporary. When we see the bread and when we see the wine, we remember that He left it here until He comes, and then there will be no more need because we all will see Him. He will know us and we will know Him.

We have a Heavenly calling. It is not an easy way. But He is comforting us and encouraging us. He is saying to us, “I know you very well. I know who you are and where you are. I know that I have called you upwards. I know that I have told you to get out, to leave behind your earthly ambitions. I have not called you to build earthly things. I have not called you to impress men. I have called you to a new place, where there is abundance of ‘milk and honey’, where you are in Christ. I will establish a Kingdom. You have a King. He reigns over you. He is building a House. This House is for God and God’s glory fills this House.”

We share in all of this. We bless His name.