



The Living God Ministries, Inc.

Montgomery & Spanish Fort, Alabama

September 13, 2019

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, co-workers and spiritual family here on the Coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and scattered children of God.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed!

“Church”

I was recently asked a question that I felt deserved taking the time to carefully explain with an answer that might be helpful to us all.

Here’s the question “Why is it that you often use the word “*ekklesia*” instead of the word “church” in both your speaking and writing?” What’s interesting, is that I’ve done this for so long, that I sometimes forget not everyone does so.

Is there really a difference? Does it matter? That all depends on what one considers “church”.

I’ve found that the *Holman Bible Dictionary*, in its article “Church” explains the background and use of the word church pretty well. “Church is the English translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*. The use of the Greek term prior to the emergence of the Christian church is important as two streams of meaning flow from the history of its usage into the New Testament understanding of church.”

In Acts 19:32 and in verse 39 we find that the Greek term essentially means “called out ones”. Called out of what we might ask? We are called out of a world that functions contrary for the most part against what God intended. We are called to be different. We are called to be separate in how we think, live and interact with others, by in the indwelling of God’s Spirit. Called out of a way of life that is contrary to God’s way. (Revelation 18:4) “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Even in the book of Acts, following God was called “The Way”. It was a different way than many in the world were used to.

In ancient times, the word *ekklesia* was commonly used to indicate an assembly of citizens within a Greek city. These same citizens had a status of privilege different than slaves, or even non-citizens. They were different.

You and I are called to be different as well! We are to live in accord with the very laws of God. We follow and obey the laws of men, unless they violate the immutable laws of God. Christ instructed His disciples to live in the world, but yet not be partakers of its ways, those ways that went against God's way and His laws.

When the early "Christians" understood themselves as a group of believers, or with commonality to the calling of God, they were indeed called by God in Jesus Christ for a very special purpose and they too were privileged as mentioned in Ephesians 2:19.

The Greek term *ekklesia* can be found more than one hundred times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was in common use during the time Jesus walked the earth in human form.

The Hebrew *qahal* meant in its simplest form "assembly" and was used in various ways, even referring to an assembly of prophets, (1 Samuel 19:20), soldiers as in Numbers 22:4, and of the people of God, as in Deut. 9:10. The use of the term in the Old Testament when referring to the people of God is crucial in understanding the term "church" within the New Testament.

We find that the first Christians were primarily Jews who used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Their use for this name was common in the Old Testament for "the people of God" and reveals to us the basic understanding of the unity and continuity of the Old and New Testament. This is why it is so important to use the whole Bible, following all of it, not just picking and choosing a book, chapter, writings of one particular author, or only one of the two Testaments given. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". That verse under inspiration of God is clear, it says all, not part, or that we can select only parts of the Bible we agree with.

The early Christians understood themselves as the people of that God who revealed Himself in the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1-2), as the true children of Israel (Rom. 2:28-29) with Abraham as their father (Romans 4:1-25), and also as the people of the New Covenant prophesied in the Old Testament. (Heb. 8:1-13).

What becomes clearer is that with this history of the meaning in the Greek and Old Testament worlds, that the term "church" can also be used in the New Testament of a local congregation of called out Christians, such as the Church of God which is in Corinth (I Cor. 1:2).

It also can refer to the entirety of the people of God, or as I like to put it “The Body of Christ of which Christ is the head”. (Eph 1:22-23) This is helpful in understanding why many use the word “church” today. Now to the reason I often use *ekklesia* instead of church.

To many, the connotation when we mention “church”, is a building, a location, a specific fellowship, or denomination. Unfortunately it can lead to competition, division, and separation. God has opened our minds, called us at this time for multiple encouraging and inspiring reasons. We should never focus on our building, where we are, how we are better, bigger, or doing His work better than others.

When asked what “church” do I belong to? I prefer to say “I belong to the body of Christ, as a called out believer, one part of that body of which Christ is the head”. Which part of that body am I? It doesn’t matter.

We may have a unique identity with a fellowship name, but ultimately we must come to understand that God has called us, you and me to as His children, to become more like Him as He lives within us (Gal. 2:20) as a body, a unit, those called out by God.

You and I are the *ekklesia* of God. The family of God. The body of the Lord. His called out ones. The *ekklesia* or church of the Living God.

This promotes unity. This promotes oneness. Ephesians 4:4-6 clearly shows “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

...as I close this letter, as I do every Friday evening...as we enter His Sabbath...reflect on this with me, will you?

And again, may God continue to richly bless you. Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-**Scott Hoefker** (Pastor and wife (Gayle) The Living God Ministries Gulf Coast)

The schedule for this week’s Sabbath is:

September 13th / Friday: Gifts for the Lord/ Praises/Gifts and Prayers to welcome God’s Sabbath 7:00 pm (via Teleconference live connect with Stephen Glover and Friends.)

September 14th / Saturday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services 10:15 am, with local services held in Montgomery with messages by Logan Moorer and Scott Hoefker. (All others are

welcomed and encouraged to connect live to Worship Services via our normal phone conference).

There will be *no* local services in Spanish Fort this Sabbath. A potluck noon meal will follow our worship services.

September 7th / Saturday: Sabbath Fellowship Study (Interactive Bible Discussion) **4:00 pm** from Montgomery. (Connecting live with all others via telephone conference).

September 14th / Saturday: National Board Meeting of the LGM at 7:00 p.m. after sunset.

Next Sabbath's Schedule:

September 20th / Friday: Gifts for the Lord/ Praises/Gifts and Prayers to welcome God's Sabbath 7:00 pm (via Teleconference live connect) with Stephen Glover and friends.

September 21st / Saturday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services 10:15 a.m., with local services held in Montgomery with the message by Stephen Glover (All are welcome and encouraged to connect live to Worship Services via our normal phone conference). There will be *no* local Sabbath Services for our congregation in Spanish Fort this Sabbath as the Hoefkers will be in Tyler, TX visiting the Church of God International.

September 21st / Saturday: Sabbath Fellowship (interactive Bible Discussion) 4:00 pm *from* Montgomery with Stephen Glover (connect live to all others via telephone conference).

Telephone Ministry (English): Call **1-712-770-4700**; then, when asked, enter Code **112165 #** to join.

(Note: All callers are muted and must press *6 to comment and *6 to resume mute.)

All times are listed in Central Standard Time zone.

Our Daily Bread Recordings

Sunday through Saturday / Our Daily Bread [listen anytime 24/7 to a recorded 15 minute message] Call 1-712-770-4709 (note this call in number is different and ends in "9"), then when asked, enter code 112165# [reference code numbers are on "Spiritual Fellowship Opportunities" on this website <http://www.tlgministriesgc.org> or at "Resources/Archives" on <http://www.haggai114.net>]

Daily Fellowship Opportunities

Sunday – Friday / **Morning Sacrifice** (Prayers & Scripture Reading) at 6:00 a.m.

Sundays / **History & Background of the Gospels** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Scott & Friends]

Mondays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Glovers & Moses]

Almond Branch Fellowship at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) (Stephen & Friends)

Tuesdays / **Haggai Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) [Stephen & Friends]

Wednesdays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Glovers & Moses]

1st & 3rd Wednesday / **Sons of God Fellowship** (Young men training) at 6:30 p.m. [Stephen & Friends]

2nd & 4th Wednesday / **Lydian's Fellowship** (Ladies) at 6:30 p.m. [Esther/Gayle & Friends]

Thursdays / **Mt. Carmel Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Hoefkers & Friends]

Scott Hoefker, Pastor

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