

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Christ Will Build His Church

by Dan Trygg

“...upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not be dominant against it.” Matthew 16:18

“And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood...” 1 Peter 2:4-5

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

In 1 Chronicles 17, **David wanted to build a house for God.** At that time, the ark of God was housed in a tent, while David was living in a house of stone and cedar. He felt that the ark of the covenant, where the Shekinah glory rested, deserved to be in a much more fitting dwelling than that. When he shared this with Nathan the prophet, he initially gave his blessing, ...but God Himself sent Nathan back to David with a message. He commended him for his *desire to honor Him*, ...even though He had never asked for a more substantial dwelling place. **David, however, was *not* to be the one to build such a house. He was a man of blood, ...a warrior.**

Though David would not build a house for God, **Yahweh turned the picture around. HE would “build a house” for David** (vs. 10). God would establish one of David's descendants as king over an eternal kingdom. **This “seed of David” would be a man of peace, and *he would be the one to build a house for God.***

So here, in this interaction between David and Yahweh, we have the idea of “build” used in two very different ways: For constructing a building, ...a dwelling place for God; and, for establishing and enlarging a people, ...here, the “house of David”. Then, the prophetic statement is made: **One from the house of David would build a house for Yahweh**, and God would establish the throne of this “seed of David” forever. **Moreover, God said, “I will cause *him* to sit in My house and in My kingdom forever**, and his throne will be established forever” (vs. 14).

This figurative use of “build” for enlarging a people was not unique in the OT scriptures. It was used in Ruth 4:11 of Rachel and Leah who together “built up the house of Israel” (cf. Deut. 25:5-9). Also, several times in Jeremiah, God prophesied that He would “build up” the nation (1:10; 24:6; 31:4; 33:7).

Both of these prophetic word pictures came together in reference to building the church, ...the “congregation” of God's people, the dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The word for “church” in Matthew 16 is the Greek word, *ekklēsia*. It means “assembly, meeting, gathering”. The etymology of the word literally refers to those *called out* for a purpose. The idea is that people were *called out* from their daily life *to assemble together* for a meeting. In the Greek translation of the OT, it was used for the “congregation” of the people, called out to gather to hear the word of Yahweh, or to rally for war. When Jesus said, “I will build my church”, none of the disciples thought about church buildings or synagogue meetings, or even temple worship. ***Ekklēsia* was never used for religious meetings. It was simply used for gathering the people.** The nature of the meeting was defined by the occasion, but it was not specifically religious.

In Matthew 16, when Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the promised King, Jesus' response was to say that this truth was the bedrock upon which “I will build My *ekklēsia*”. When Jesus said that, **He was talking about *building* a “called-out-people”, ...a family, a nation, an assembly of people called together for a purpose, ...not a “church”, as we might think.**

What was the nature of this “gathering of people”? And, how does this relate to the word picture of “building a house”? From Matthew 16, we can see that God's people are “called out” for war! We are “called out” to assault the gates of Hades, ...and they will not be able to stand against us! This sounds like the congregation of Israel in the OT, called out to gather for battle. **The congregation of Jesus, the church, is “called out” to oppose the devil and his works. It is a *spiritual battle*, not physical, ...but *the warfare is real*.** We are “called out” to liberate people from the strongholds and captivity of the kingdom of darkness.

Then, if we go over to 1 Peter 2, Peter saw us as **“like living stones who are being built up as a spiritual house, unto a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual offerings well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ”** (vs. 5). In verse 9, Peter uses the *other* word picture, that of a **“called-out people”**: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal (‘kingdom’) priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, in order that you might proclaim the excellencies of the One calling you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”** The first half of the verse harks back to language used repeatedly to describe Israel’s intended relationship to Yahweh in the Torah (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 10:15; 14:2). They were a people that God had sovereignly delivered out of bondage to slavery in Egypt. They were called to a new purpose, ...to live to honor and serve God. They were to represent His goodness and His wisdom to the surrounding nations, by loving Him and walking in His ways. In these few verses from Peter, **we have both the idea of a called-out people summoned to be dedicated to live for and serve God, and that of the assembly and building up of a spiritual house from individual “living stones” to become a place where God would dwell.**

From Ephesians 2, we find that **we have been “called out” from among those at a distance, ...the strangers and aliens..., to be gathered into the citizenship of the kingdom of God, and into His very family, ...members of His household!** He is making us into *His people!* Then, Paul changed the word picture from a **“household” to a “house”**. We are **“being built”** upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in relation to Jesus as the Cornerstone. In Him, the whole building, being-fitted-and-joined-closely-together, grows unto a holy sanctuary/temple in the Lord, in whom **we are being-built-together unto a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.**

The temple that God spoke to David about is not made of stone and wood. It is made of people who have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the “Seed of David”, who will build up a house. *He is building up a “people”,* enlarging the spiritual house of David, *and He is also building a house for God to dwell in,* as promised. **We are joined and assembled together as family members in God’s household, ...and together we become a house/habitation in which He dwells.**

Then, in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12, we get a glimpse of the assembly together of another spiritual picture of the church. We are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). **We are all members** (“limbs, functioning parts”) **of the body of Christ.** We all have different giftings and functions, but our responsibility is to **“build up the body of Christ”** (4:12,16), as each part learns to function effectively in its area of service. Then the body will build itself up in love.

What does this mean for us? Christ is the One who is building His assembly of “called out ones”. Not only has He called us out of our lostness, unbelief and sin, but He has made us His own, joined us to His family, and desires to assemble us together with a team of co-laborers so that we can effectively do His will. **Many of us feel confident that we are in that community of co-workers right now.** It is remarkable to see the hand of God in calling each one of us out from the lives we had been living before coming here, ...and to recognize that HE brought us here, to *this* particular gathering of believers. **We have often prayed about this. We have asked God to bring the people here that He wants to plant here and serve with us, ...and to keep others away, who don’t belong here, or who would cause disruption. We have seen Him do this.**

It is amazing to hear the various stories of people. Many of us who assemble here do not live nearby. This would not be a “natural” place for us to come. *AND, ...that is precisely the point!* **God is the One who summons His people for their place and role in the body of Christ.** He **“calls us out”** in order to **“call us together”**. It is important for us to recognize that, ...because sometimes we have other ideas, or we don’t always see what God wants to do with the people He brings together. **Part of our job as the body of Christ is to welcome one another, and help one another find their God-intended role in our community.** Sometimes that just seems to happen naturally, ...sometimes people need to be encouraged or invited. Sometimes that means we need to make room, or listen to new ideas, or try other things, because new people will add new dynamics to how we do things. Sometimes we need to talk about it. **The question is: “What is God doing?”** Sometimes it means taking new risks, or trying other things, because you are looking to discover your role in the body. Elders are supposed to be “over-seeing” the gathering, watching to see what God may be introducing or bringing to pass. We talk and pray about what we see. **We are watching to see what Christ is doing, because HE is building His church!**