

What does the Greek verb “eklegomai” mean? A Series on Election: Part 2

In studying the concept of election, there are two Greek word groups that describe the act of judgment or decision by which preference is given to one of several possibilities, people or groups. They are the Greek terms “haireomai” and “eklegomai”. While both can be used to express human choice, most uses in the Bible are in the theological sense and describe God’s elective activity. The focus of this article will be on the second word group, “eklegomai”, and how God uses it with regard to human beings.

Eklegomai

This Greek verb means “to pick out or choose for oneself”. It can refer to groups of people and individuals.

God chose the nation of Israel for a purpose and separated them from the rest of mankind. In this instance God chooses and elects a favored and privileged nation regardless of their characteristics, virtue or works.

Acts 13:17

17) "The God of this people Israel chose (**eklegomai**) our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.

Jesus chose the men who would be His apostles and the function they would serve, and it appears that it would not include salvation. This is especially obvious in Jesus’ choice of Judas (John 6:70-71) whose unbelief serves to fulfill a messianic prophecy (Ps 41:9) and bear witness to Jesus’ deity. Occurring with divine foreknowledge, the election of a traitor was not a mistake, and Jesus’ prophetic words of John 13:18-19 occur just before Judas betrays Him in John 13:26-27. After the departure of Judas, Jesus reveals the purpose of “eklegomai” in John 15:16. The apostles, less Judas, were chosen and appointed for fruitful service.

Luke 6:13

13) And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose (**eklegomai**) twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

John 6:70

70) Jesus answered them, "Did (**eklegomai**) I Myself not choose (**eklegomai**) you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"

John 13:18

18) "I do not speak of all of you I know the ones I have chosen (**eklegomai**); but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.'

John 15:16, 19

16) "You did (**eklegomai**) not choose (**eklegomai**) Me but I chose (**eklegomai**) you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

19) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose (**eklegomai**) you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

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Acts 1:2, 24

2) until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen (**eklegomai**).

24) And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen (**eklegomai**)

God chose Peter for a purpose: to share the Gospel with the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18).

Acts 15:7

7) After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice (**eklegomai**) among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Just as the nation of Israel was chosen, Christians have been chosen for a role in eschatology. In the context of Mark 13, election has a serious responsibility in which Jesus foresees situations that will challenge their faith. And Jesus exhorts, "But take heed..." (Mark 13:23).

Mark 13:20

Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose (**eklegomai**), He shortened the days.

The election of the Christian community emphasizes the end of self-centeredness. In Christ alone is one saved and deemed righteous.

In the case of the Corinthian church, God's chose the less desirable for the purpose of shaming wisdom, power and carnal fame, so that no one may boast before God.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28

27) but God has chosen (**eklegomai**) the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen (**eklegomai**) the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28) and the base things of the world and the despised God has (**eklegomai**) chosen (**eklegomai**), the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

In the case of the Ephesian church, the hymn of praise focuses on the basis, mediator and goal of election. This is the only place in the New Testament where “eklegomai” has an emphasis on eternity. Jesus Christ is, along with the Father and Holy Spirit, the electing God. As the incarnate Mediator between God and human beings, He is the elected One and calls the church to a consecrated walk in the presence of God.

Ephesians 1:4

4) just as He chose (**eklegomai**) us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him In love

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In the case of James, God’s choice of the poor is a reference to the early church which was comprised of largely poor people, but they were “rich” in faith. Evaluating people based on their socio-economic status was shallow and superficial.

James 2:5

5) Listen, my beloved brethren: did (**eklegomai**) not God choose (**eklegomai**) the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

There has been considerable discussion whether election pertains to salvation. The Greek verb “eklegomai”, as seen above, is never explicitly contrasted with the idea of God’s judgment or condemnation. Most uses seem to be associated with the exercise of His sovereign will in the process of fulfilling His Abrahamic Covenant (see the article: Divine Covenants... the basis for a plan of salvation... at www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/1God/CovenantAbrahamic.aspx). For example:

For his faith, God chose Abraham as the recipient of His unconditional covenant. This covenant included personal promises to Abraham.

Despite Ishmael’s status as being the first born, God chose Isaac to be the line through which the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant would flow (Gen 21:12-13).

While Abraham had many descendants, God chose Jacob (Rom 9:13) as the line through which the covenant would be passed. The nation of Israel arises from Jacob (Gen 35:1-15), and God identifies Himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:15).

The nation of Israel is chosen as God’s own people (if they obeyed His voice and kept His covenant [Ex 19:5]).

Moses is chosen as the man through whom the nation of Israel learns of the conditional Mosaic Covenant; the moral, social and worship conditions for receiving the blessings of God.

Expanding on the Seed aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, David is chosen as the one who receives the Davidic Covenant, which promises that the Messiah will be a descendant.

Jesus was chosen as the mediator of the unconditional New Covenant (see the article: Divine Covenants... the New Covenant at www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/1God/CovenantNew.aspx) who fulfills the conditional Mosaic Covenant. The New Covenant is the expansion of the blessing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, and Jesus chooses His disciples for service in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ as the means of receiving God’s blessing.

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