

What does the Greek term “eklektos” mean? A Series on Election: Part 4

The Greek term “eklektos” is a participle of the verb “eklegomai” which can be used as a noun (i.e. elect) or as an adjective that means “picked out” or “chosen” by someone. With regard to divine choice, who and what makes God’s elect? Is God’s elect a reference to a group or individual? Does God’s elect indicate whether one receives salvation or not? Because the theological topic of “election” has been difficult to fully understand, these types of questions swirl about and ultimately reflect the tension between the sovereignty of God and the free will of human beings.

The New Testament uses “eklektos” in the singular or in the plural. When used in the plural, it is used in the same sense as the Hebrew language intended: the object of election is a body of people even though it is spoken of as many individuals. Except in one instance, when used in the Gospels, “eklektos” is used in the context of eschatology (the end times).

When used in the last verse of the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:14), “eklektos” provides a deeper meaning and context to the trilogy of parables presented in Matthew (Parable of Two Sons: Matt 21:28-32, Parable of the Landowner: Matt 21:33-44 and Parable of the Wedding Feast: Matt 22:1-14). Speaking to religious Jewish leaders, Jesus tells the story of a man who was invited to the Wedding Feast but not wearing wedding clothes. He was in effect disobedient and did not have the clothing that entitled him to the wedding; in essence, “eklektos” was fulfilled only in obedience. In this commentary of Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ, to be “eklektos” seems predicated on human decision. The invited are not coerced to come; they have the choice to come freely or not. But if they come, they must put on the proper clothing. The Parable of the Wedding Feast indicates that those who believe and obey are of the “elect”.

"For many are called, but few are chosen (**eklektos**)." (Matt 22:14)

In telling the Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), Jesus tells the disciples that God would answer the persistent prayers of the elect. Jesus is referring to Believers, and His parable reveals what the attitude of the elect should be. In ending the parable with a rhetorical question (when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?) (Rev 8:1-5), Jesus seeks to encourage the disciples towards faithfulness and persistent prayer.

now, will not God bring about justice for His elect (**eklektos**) who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? (Luke 18:7)

When Jesus shares his view of the coming apocalypse as a warning to Peter, James, John and Andrew, He uses the term “elect” to describe the world wide community of Believers. Despite the tribulation, the gospel must continually be preached, and by divine mercy, the days of turmoil will be shortened to preserve the “eklektos”.

"Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect (**eklektos**) those days will be cut short. (Matt 24:22)

"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect (**eklektos**). (Matt 24:24)

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect (**eklektos**) from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matt 24:31)

"Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect (**eklektos**), whom He chose, He shortened the days. (Mark 13:20)

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For false Christs prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect (**eklektos**). (Mark 13:22)

And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect (**eklektos**) from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. (Mark 13:27)

When the singular use of **eklektos** is applied to Jesus Christ, it conveys a sense of quality to the object chosen. Luke 23:35 is a contemptuous doubting of Jesus' claim of deity; His enemies scorn the perceived quality of His Kingship for the failure to assert Himself. In other examples (1 Peter 2:4, 6), there is a sense that quality is because of the divine appointment. Jesus Christ is “choice” or “select”, because He was appointed to atone for the sins of humanity.

And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen (**eklektos**) One." (Luke 23:35)

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been ejected by men, but is choice (**eklektos**) and precious in the sight of God, (1 Pet 2:4)

For this is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE (**eklektos**) STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (1 Pet 2:6)

Paul's uses the noun “eklektos” to encourage Christians to live as a new creation as a consequence of God's gracious love through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Because of God love, Believers should pursue godliness and love others. While some passages suggest that God's elect is based on a pre-temporal appointment, is it possible that God's election is based on His foreknowledge of who will come to faith in Him?

Who will bring a charge against God's elect (**eklektos**)? God is the one who justifies; (Rom 8:33)

So, as those who have been chosen (**eklektos**) of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (Col 3:12)

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen (**eklektos**) angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. (1 Tim 5:21)

For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen (**eklektos**), so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. (2 Tim 2:10)

Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen (**eklektos**) of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, (Tit 1:1)

Peter's use of the noun “eklektos” involves the explicit inclusion of Gentiles in the community of the elect (1 Pet 1:1). Originally made with the nation of Israel, the Old Testament promises now apply to the universal Christian church (1 Pet 2:10-11).

This inclusion is based on faith in Jesus Christ, and this is readily seen in 1 Peter 2:6-9 where the unbelieving is contrasted with the believing and obedience with disobedience. Being part of the “eklektos” depends on whether one believes in Jesus Christ or not and obeys Him. This apparent freedom to choose to believe places responsibility on each human being the eternal consequences of God's judicial judgment.

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And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice (**eklektos**) and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE (**eklektos**) STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (1 Pet 2:4-6)

But you are A CHOSEN (**eklektos**) RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Pet 2:9)

When referring to Believers, the New Testament use of God's chosen (**eklektos**) never engenders pride. Instead, to be "eklektos" reflects a faith in the atoning work of Jesus, recognition of divine grace, and producing grateful obedience in service to Christ. This inclusion is dependent upon one's decision to believe in Jesus. And it appears that each person bears a responsibility for the consequences of their decision.

The New Testament concept of “eklektos” is rooted in God’s introduction of the elect in the Old Testament:

‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” (Ex 19:4-6)

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