

Kingdom Congress of Illinois

Position Paper on Ekklesia Convocation: An Overview on Jesus Declaration of “I will build my church”

Jesus declared, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16: 18). This was the first place where Jesus spoke about His church. Scripture records only three times in two places where Jesus used the word church. The majority of Christ’s discourse centered on the Kingdom. Either Christ’s limited use of church indicated that He was putting very little emphasis on the topic or that the placement of the term was in a context already weighty with meaning. Only one of those possibilities can be true.

The work of the early Apostles to establish the church and the repeated use the term church in the Epistles reinforce its importance. The New Testament uses the Greek word for church, which is *ekklesia*, 115 times in 112 sections. One can hardly assume the early followers of Christ misconstrued His intent or that 2000 years of church history has been off target. Therefore, the second option is most assuredly true. Christ used the term church in an environment where His listeners understood its background and the meaning of His words.

The context of His proclamation was during a discourse with His disciples when He questioned them as to who they thought Him to be. They responded with a variety of answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. Peter replied, “You are the Christ” – the long awaited Messiah, the promised anointed One. Indeed, Peter proclaimed Jesus to be the Deliverer who had been promised to Israel and the Redeemer who the nation believed God would send. Peter continued: “You are the Son of the Living God” – the mature heir of the Ever-Existent, Supreme Deity of our Fathers. Peter’s proclamation was totally accurate. Jesus affirmed his words and even informed him that his understanding and revelation came to him directly from the Living God.

Once Jesus was assured that His followers had clarity as to His person, the Lord was ready to bring clarity to His mission. He would build His *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* is a compound Greek word from *ek*, meaning out, and *kaleo*, meaning to call. Simply defined, *ekklesia* means those who are called out. Jesus’ words about His purpose and plan had just as much historical significance as did His person. When questioned about who He was, the disciples recounted their knowledge of Israel’s history, her heroes, her register of the faithful. Once again, Jesus would have been expecting these men of Israel to draw from their knowledge of the work of God among their own. Called out ones! Who had been the called out ones?

Undoubtedly, the minds of the disciples would have considered their ancestors who were called out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses (Hos. 11:1). As a called out nation, they were built together into a nation as a special possession of God and a special priestly people to the other nations of the earth (Ex. 19:3-6). They were given a tabernacle. They were afforded access to God’s glory and God’s laws. Moses was called up to the Mountain and given the oracles and the plans for building a biblical society. They were called out of darkness to become a nation of light (Deut. 28:1; Mt. 5:14-16).

Jesus was stating that He would do a similar work. He was the servant likened unto Moses that God promised to send (Deut. 18:15; 18:19, Acts. 7:37; Heb. 3:1-6). Jesus was calling out His twelve apostles instead of Moses’ twelve sons of Jacob. He would build His called out into a holy nation with a special priestly anointing (I Peter 2:9; Ex. 19:3-6). He would build His new tabernacle (I Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:19-22) and give His followers access to God’s glory and

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God’s Word. Jesus would train His followers and then commission them to go into society as lights to disciple the nations (Mt. 28:18-20).

When Jesus stated He would build His called out – His ekklesia – He was declaring that just as Moses had a covenantal, called-out people to steward God’s kingdom in the earth, He would have a covenantal, called-out people. That day of this great proclamation, Jesus identified His called out in contrast to the called out of Moses. And, He identified the distinguishing mark of His ekklesia – “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The two called out groups would have much in common. However, there would be one prominent distinguishing mark. The gates of death, the legal hold of death’s incarceration, the Adamic penalty that placed humanity under the sentence of death and expelled mankind from God’s presence: these were all going to be dismantled by Christ’s substitutionary work. The locked doors of death from Adam would not prevail – would not be strong against – Christ’s ekklesia. Why? Jesus would defeat death. Jesus would pay the penalty of death. Jesus would open the doors of death. Life would overcome death.

Indeed, that is exactly what happened. The resurrection of Christ was proof positive that death was defeated. The first Adam had placed humanity under death but the Last Adam liberated mankind from death’s tyranny. Under Christ, a new era began. The reign of life began. And not only was Jesus resurrected, but those who believed would pass from death to life (Jn. 3:36; 5:24-26; Rom. 5:17; 6:4). Jesus started an ekklesia of the resurrected. He told His followers in Matt. 16:18 that the distinguishing difference between the called out of Moses and His called out was that the doors of death would be unable to prevail. The hallmark of the New Covenant Era would be the defeat and destruction of death.

Jesus’ ekklesia would operate free from the overarching reign of death but His ekklesia would continue the work of the former ekklesia. Some things would definitely change. The Levites would be replaced by the priesthood of all believers after the order of Melchisedec. The sacrificial system would change. Many ordinances related to temple and to the allotments of land and inheritances of the tribes would not hold the same significance as the church spread throughout all the nations. Yet many of the statutes that instructed the old order in responsible stewardship of the earth and Kingdom advancement into all spheres of human endeavors would continue. The old would be reflected in the new and the new would transform the old.

Into the context of an old ekklesia and into the ears of men who understood stewardship of a covenant, Jesus identified and empowered the new ekklesia to take the keys of authority and accept the assignment to be Kingdom stewards. These keys would open the door of earth or allow earthly access to God’s will, heaven’s purposes, and kingdom realities. Conversely, these same keys would close the door of earth or deny earthly access to Satan’s will, sinful imaginations, counter-kingdom strategies. “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” would be more than a prayer. That prayer would materialize as the ekklesia used the keys given to them by Christ.

Before man was fashioned or the ekklesia formed, God brought heaven to earth. Because God created all things and because nothing existed before God made it, God had no one or nowhere to go to get the pattern for His creations. It could be said that the blueprint God used came from inside of Himself and in conformity to His own will and wisdom. Therefore,

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everything He created was an earthly reflection of His eternal realities. Drawing from the metaphor of keys, God used His authority to unlock or loose heaven on earth. He was the first to use His keys.

After each day of creation, God would evaluate His work and declare, “It is good.” That judgment was based upon the fact that what had been fashioned matched the pattern that was inside the heart, mind, and will of God. The creation passed inspection. It was good. Heaven was reflected and, in a measure, duplicated on the earth. Psalm 19:1 states, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” The words of this familiar refrain tell us that the skies with all the stars, sun, moon, comets, or galaxies tell us and show us unseen truths about who God is and what He can do. When God made man’s heaven, God revealed eternal realities. With His keys, He brought heaven to earth.

Having set the pattern of making the earth a reflection of heaven and a welcoming environment for the eternal, God placed the earth into the hands of His earth managers – mankind. Man was to follow God’s example. Man was to get a pattern for his labors from the heavenly realm and then go to work with the earth to build little heavenly replicas in every sphere of human endeavor. In the Garden, God gave man the keys and the authority to determine what would be allowed and what would not be allowed upon the earth.

Adam used his power to allow on earth what God had not allowed in heaven. From that Garden event and on throughout the pages of scripture, God sought human representatives that would use their authority to manage the earth in such a fashion as to advance God’s will and God’s kingdom. In the early days of the bible’s redemptive narrative, God called individuals and gave them kingdom keys: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God elected each individual and authorized them to take the keys of the kingdom and release heaven into the earth. The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews recounts the heroes of faith who faithfully administrated their portion of the earth by using the kingdom keys.

Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, became the father of twelve sons whose progeny grew into the nation of Israel. At that point in redemptive history, God called the nation into a covenant with him and appointed them to be managers of His kingdom “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation . . .” (Ex.19:5-6). Israel was special because she was to function as a priestly nation to all the other nations. She was to use her authority to bring heaven to the earth. She was given keys – keys of the kingdom. These keys would open the door of earth or allow earthly access to God’s will, heaven’s purposes, and kingdom realities. Conversely, these same keys would close the door of earth or deny earthly access to Satan’s will, sinful imaginations, counter-kingdom strategies. (Sound familiar?) Israel served God as His called out ekklesia to build heavenly realities into the earth.

Keys of the kingdom was not a new concept, a new idea, or a new phrase that Jesus invented on the day He called for His church. Jesus was informing His called out that they would be required to function under the same mandate that Moses’ called out had functioned. Jesus’ ekklesia would be required to steward the kingdom, use kingdom authority to bind and loose, advance the kingdom, and bring heaven to earth. The new ekklesia would be comprised of persons from the blood line of Israel and persons from the blood lines of every kindred, tribe,

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and tongue. The composition of the ekklesia would take on a new face, but the job was as old as Adam. Actually, the job preceded Adam; for God, Himself, was the first to take the kingdom keys and open the earth to receive heavenly realities.

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