

What does the Greek term “eklogē” mean? A Series on Election: Part 3

There are two other words with “eklegomai” that pertain to election: “eklogē” and “eklektos”. What do they mean and how are they used? What do they tell us about the concept of God’s act of choosing? Does God elect whom He will save? This article will examine the Greek term “eklogē” and the seven times it is used in the New Testament.

Eklogē

This feminine noun exclusively refers to God’s act of election, picking out or choosing.

God’s reveals to Ananias His election of Saul to be His instrument of witness:

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen (**eklogē**) instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; (Acts 9:15)

In Romans, Paul uses “eklogē”, God’s election, in reference to an appointed position and historical task. Romans 9:11 refers to the choice of Jacob instead of the older brother Edom (Mal 1:2-5) for the line of promise. Romans 11:5, 7, 28 refer to God’s choice of the nation of Israel, “if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples” (Ex 19:5). Of those who had a genuine faith, the remnant obeyed and kept His covenant; they “obtained it” and were the chosen ones. The Jews who failed to have faith were still loved “for the sake of their fathers.”

for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice (**eklogē**) would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, (Rom 9:11)

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice (**eklogē**). (Rom 11:5)

What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen (**eklogē**) obtained it, and the rest were hardened; (Rom 11:7)

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice (**eklogē**) they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; (Rom 11:28)

In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, “eklogē” is used to indicate God’s choice of the universal Christian church, because of His love; God’s election of the church is the basis of its existence and for the purpose of being His witnesses (1 Thess 1:5-10).

knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice (**eklogē**) of you; (1 Thes 1:4)

The context of 2 Peter 1:10 suggests that some aspect of election is established by obedience. “Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling” indicates that God’s supernatural call is somehow made sure by human effort and responsibility. Exodus 19:5 indicates that faith in God makes certain one's election in the Old Testament; thus, in the New Testament, it would be faith in God through His Son Jesus Christ.

10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing (**eklogē**) you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2 Pet 1:10)

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In the seven uses of “eklogē”, none are in reference to salvation. The intentional use of this term seems to be for the designation of a person or group of people for a divine purpose, and in one instance obedience seems to be a criterion for some aspect of election. Yet that divine election does not carry with it any implication, sense of elitism or superiority of character.

While the biblical use of the term “eklogē” seems more purpose driven, the context of the biblical passages appears to provide a depth and complexity to include the idea of salvation.

For example, while Romans 9:7-8 indicates election as God's choice of using the nation of Israel to make available salvation to the whole world, Paul is making the argument that election is not restricted to the nation of Israel, and that His choice is not based on any good works.

Romans 9:17-23 paints an image of a potter and His clay that does have implications regarding individual salvation. Paul begins the imagery by explicitly stating God's right to mold clay for His purposes: an honorable or common use; each vessel represents one human being.

It may be significant to note that there is no mention that clay was molded for evil or dishonorable use.

In Romans 9:22-23, some take the passage literally that God prepares some for eternal doom. But when examining the grammatical structure of the phrases “prepared for destruction” and its parallel “prepared beforehand for glory,” a notable difference is observed.

The first “prepared” (prepared for destruction) can be understood as a reflexive as in “prepared themselves,” or as a passive as in “were prepared.” In the latter thought is that they unsaved have been and are in the state of readiness or ripeness to receive God's wrath. God has patiently endured the antagonism of the unsaved (Acts 14:16; Rom 3:25), and their judgment is coming. Those who oppose God or refuse Him are then “prepared” by Him for condemnation (Rom 2:5).

The second “prepared” (prepared beforehand for glory) means “which He prepared.” Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are “prepared” for glory. Through faith in Jesus Christ, God bestows salvation.

Paul's use of the imagery the Potter and the clay is not the first time it was used in the Bible. Jeremiah 18 uses this same imagery and a study of this chapter can provide clarity to Paul's use of the imagery and a clearer understanding of the term “eklogē.”

In contrast to Paul's use of the imagery, Jeremiah 18:6 indicates that the clay represents the nation of Israel, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” Through Jeremiah (Jer 18:7-10), God illustrates His sovereignty by revealing how He need only speak to effect a nation.

Jeremiah 18:10 provides the pivotal concept, “if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.” Here salvation, God's blessings, is conditioned on a human beings response in obeying God's voice and not doing evil in His sight.

Just as Jeremiah speaks of the human response of fidelity to the Mosaic Covenant, Paul speaks of salvation conditioned by the human response of faith in Christ (Rom 10).

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Consistent with this context are the consequences of unbelief found in Jeremiah 19:10-11: “Then you are to break the jar in sight of the men who accompany you and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot again be repaired.”’”

When both Greek terms, “eklegomai” and “eklogē,” are used within the context of both the saved and unsaved, there is considerable confusion in understanding how election works with salvation. In the last article of this series, the Greek term “eklektos” will be examined to see what light its understanding may shed on the relationship between election and salvation.

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