

It Pleased the Whole Ecclesia

Introduction

There are four times in scripture that it says the whole ecclesia was pleased with a decision or action. Two in the New Testament and two in the Old Testament. It is a phrase which ties the New Testament ecclesia with the Old Testament ecclesia in principle and practice.

In a previous article, “The Day of the Assembly”, we saw the history and importance of this word “ecclesia” for the Greeks but also for the Jews. The word “ecclesia” was used in the Septuagint (for the most part) to translate the Hebrew word “qahal”. The translation is a good one for both words have this sense of “calling people to an assembly”. It is these words that provide so many connections between the ecclesia in the New Testament and the ecclesia in the Old Testament. Hopefully, we’ve come to a deeper appreciation that the ecclesia in the Old Testament has models and lessons that are profitable for our ecclesias today.

It should come as no surprise that Jesus’ instruction for the ecclesia in Matthew 18 has its principles clearly established from the law. For he came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. He was quite aware of the ecclesia in the wilderness. When he said the word “ecclesia” for the very first time in Matt. 16:18 “upon this rock I will build my ecclesia” it was with much significance.

When Jesus chose this word for the gathering of his believers, he had a choice between the word ecclesia or synagogue. The word synagogue is also used extensively throughout the Septuagint for the congregation of Israel. Its equivalent in Hebrew is “edah”. For the Jews of his day though it had come to mean a meeting place (a building) outside of the temple service.¹ A synagogue was a congregation separate from the temple and never meant to replace it. The same could not be said for what Jesus was to build. Jesus was clearly establishing something that would be the true temple of God (John 4:19-24; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5).

I Will Build My Ecclesia

When we look closer at Matt. 16:18, the involvement of the Lord Jesus in building his ecclesia is evident.

“... thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build² my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The Lord is saying here that he would personally have a hand in building his ecclesia. The starting point, of course, would be his own death and resurrection. After throwing the money changers out of the temple he had this to say to the Jews who were looking for a sign,

¹ Many times, it says Jesus went into “their synagogues” Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54 Mark 1:23,39; Luke 4:15 in contrast to “my ecclesia”

² Greek oikodomeo lit. house builder

“Destroy this temple, and in three days **I will raise it up**³. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of **the temple of his body.**” (John 2:18-22)

The body of Jesus comes to symbolize the ecclesia (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Eph. 1:22-23). There is a wonderful mixing of ideas here between the literal death and resurrection of Jesus and its purpose to destroy a temple made with hands and build a temple (the ecclesia) made without hands where God could dwell (Acts 7:38-50). Later his accusers remembered his words but have these interesting additional words.

“We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that **is made with hands**, and within three days **I will build**⁴ **another made without hands.**” (Mark 14:58, only included by Mark)

We have then in these three passages the assurance that Jesus would build the temple (aka the ecclesia). The stone which the builders rejected would become the head of the corner (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11) and we as lively stones (1 Pet. 2:5) would be built on that foundation, growing into a holy temple in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22).

When we come then to the Acts of the Apostles, we really see the hand of the Lord Jesus personally at work. In fact, it might have been better to call this book the Acts of Jesus Christ After His Ascension. Notice how Luke carefully words his introduction.

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus **began** both to do and teach.” (Acts 1:1)

The “former treatise” is the Gospel of Luke which he refers to as what Jesus “began both to do and teach.” If that was the beginning, then it implies that this sequel would show how Jesus was continuing to both “do and teach” among the Apostles.

- In Acts 2:33 it says “he [Jesus] hath shed forth (or poured out v.17,18) this, which ye now see and hear” referring to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is the direct work of Jesus who said “I will send unto you... the Spirit of truth” (John 20:26).
- Acts 2:47 states “the Lord added to the church daily as such as should be saved” (see also 5:14). It is interesting to think if this is God or Jesus being referred to here as “Lord”. In many other passages the Lord is Jesus, so it seems likely here and fits with him building his ecclesia.
- Stephen sees the Lord Jesus standing at God’s right hand (Acts 7:56). Normally Jesus would be sitting at God’s right hand but here he stands up, active to bring judgment.
- The Lord Jesus appears to Paul on the road to Damascus saying that Paul’s persecutions of the ecclesia were really persecutions of him (Acts 9:4-5). Paul, relating this incident in Acts 26:16 indicates there would be further appearances of the Lord Jesus to him which happen in Acts 18:9-10 and 23:11 (cp. 2 Tim. 4:17).

³ Greek egeiro meaning to rise up, awaken from sleep or resurrection. Only placed used of rearing a building. Chief priests and Pharisees quote it in Mat. 27:63-64 knowing it was about Jesus’ resurrection.

⁴ Greek oidodomeo, same as Matt. 16:18

- Jesus instructs Annanias (Acts 9:10)

All this shows that the promise of Jesus in Matt. 28:20, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" was true. Jesus was always there, active and building his ecclesia.

Has anything changed in this regard, brothers and sisters? Do you imagine a distant Christ in the heavens detached from us? Nothing could be farther from the truth. In the beginning of the book of Revelation Jesus appears, not as an ordinary human being but as the Son of Man symbolized in all his glory. It is an echo to the vision given to Daniel and to the transfiguration.

Revelation 1:13 says,

"And **in the midst** of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

This is a vision of the glorified Christ as he says in verse 18,

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have **the keys of hell and of death.**"

Notice the allusion here back to Matt. 16:18, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it... I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." This is how Jesus is still building his ecclesia. The gate of hell is a prison in which we are bound by sin. The key is the forgiveness we have through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The thing I want to point out here is that he is "in the midst" of the seven candlesticks, which represent these seven ecclesias (1:20) to whom the book of Revelation is being sent. Not only is he in the midst but he is walking in the midst of them as it says in 2:1,

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, **who walketh in the midst** of the seven golden candlesticks;"

Walking in the midst of the ecclesias is very significant. He is not distant. As each ecclesia gets listed he says, "I know thy works..." With the angels at his command, Jesus knows both the good and bad of all these ecclesias. Jesus' careful eye is not just limited to seven ecclesias. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Do we imagine him within our midst? Brothers and sisters, how much better off would we be if we always had our eyes open to this reality? Imagine Jesus Christ in our very midst, among our ecclesias. Not just as a man but as the glorified Son of Man. It is a sobering thought that the book of Revelation gives us. We know that we shall be judged individually but we also get the aspect here that we will be judged collectively as an ecclesia.

Ecclesial Problems in the Acts

There is then an affinity we share with the early ecclesia in the Acts. The same Lord is over both. He still walks among the candlesticks. He is still building his ecclesia.

It is interesting then to consider an overview of what happens in the Acts with the thought in mind that Jesus is watching over all of it. Sometimes directly directing but in most cases seeming invisible in the background.

It all started in an upper room with 120 disciples all of “one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). The Greek word “homothumadon” is in meaning “one mind” or of the “same passion”. This unity of mind would typify the ecclesia throughout the Acts (2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25; cp. Rom. 15:6 “one mind”)⁵ and be an example to us (1 Cor. 1:10).

That unity would be challenged. The “one accord” was something they had to work for. It is important to note that the idyllic ecclesia that was born in Acts 2 did not stay that way. It had severe growth pains. The challenges follow an interesting pattern of persecution from outside following by internal conflicts.

Acts	From Where?	Details
Ch. 4	Outside	Persecution from the Sanhedrin
Ch. 5	Inside	Ananias and Saphira killed
Ch. 5	Outside	Persecution from the High Priest
Ch. 6	Inside	Dispute over ministrations to widows
Ch. 7-9	Outside	Persecution of Saul
Ch. 10-11	Inside	They of the circumcision contend with Peter (11:2)
Ch. 12	Outside	Persecution from Herod
Ch. 15	Inside	Jerusalem conference concerning Gentiles

In Acts 3-4 there is persecution from the Sanhedrin (outside). In Acts 5 there is trouble in the ecclesia with Ananias and Saphira (inside) and then in the same chapter comes more persecution from the high priest (outside). In Acts 6 there is trouble again in the ecclesia with a dispute over the ministrations to widows (inside). In Acts 7-12 there is persecution by Saul and then by Herod (outside). In Acts 13-14 there is the first missionary journey which ends in controversy for the ecclesias in Acts 15 over the law of Moses and the Gentile believers (inside). It typifies the saying of Paul, “our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Cor. 7:5).

There are two of these incidents in chapter 6 and 15 that we want to take a closer look at now. They were major problems for the ecclesia internally. Even though they had the leadership of the Apostles they would be still be challenged. This is the way God works, expecting us to work it out together. The Holy Spirit gifts were not there to give automatic answers for some difficult disputes among the brethren. Jesus was at work building his ecclesia but much in the same way he builds our ecclesias today.

⁵ It is also used of those in opposition to the truth (7:57; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29).

Handled incorrectly and it would cause division and hurt. Addressed correctly would bring consensus and joy.

Here is the surprising thing. Once we get our bearings on what happens in the Acts, we are going to see they have their counterparts in the ecclesia in the Old Testament.

Four Times the Whole Ecclesia was Pleased

Acts 6

Here are the growing pains and with it the problem in Acts 6:1,

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.”

This is the first real sign of a widespread problem within the ecclesia. You will notice the problem wasn't about doctrine but about fellowship (sharing). It seems among the welfare fund there had come some respect of persons. The Grecians (Hellenists) were Greek speaking Jews which had more of a Greek culture about them. The Hebrews were native Jews. At risk was a very important commandment of God to take care of the helpless widows among themselves.⁶

This was a new challenge to the Apostles, but their answer was not, as they looked back to the ecclesia in the wilderness for answers. Moses himself had been burdened with a people who murmured about food. The following table shows the similarities.

Numbers 11	Acts 6
v. 4 - A mixed multitude	v. 1 - A multitude of Grecians and Jews
v. 1, 9 - murmur	v. 1 - murmuring
v. 9 – about daily manna	v. 1 – about daily ministrations
v. 11, 14 – Moses unable to bear everything	v. 2 – Apostles unable to leave word to serve tables
v. 16 – Seventy able elders sought out by Moses (Deut. 1:13, notice the qualifications are the same)	v. 3 – Seven able men sought out by the brethren
Deut. 1:14 “The thing you have spoken is good for us to do”	v. 5 – It pleased the whole multitude
v. 16 – Seventy to stand before the Lord	v. 6 – Seven are set before the apostles
v. 17, 25 – They are given the spirit	v. 3 – The seven are full of the Holy Spirit and the apostles lay their hands on them.
v. 26 – Two stand out, Eldad and Medad	Chapters 7 and 8 – Two stand out, Stephen and Philip

⁶ Deut. 10:18; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19-21; 26:12-13; 27:19; Isa 1:17-23; Jer. 7:6; Mal 3:5.

The real closeness of how the Apostles relied on Moses is in Deut. 1:9-17 where Moses reminds the people of the time.

“And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: The LORD your God hath **multiplied** you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!) How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? **Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes**, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is **good for us to do**. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, **Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment;** but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.”

As Moses, the Apostles now do likewise and gather to them all the disciples (v. 2, all 5,000?). They were to seek out among themselves “men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.” Notice the apostles did not make the choice just like Moses. They wisely expected the ecclesia to do it. They were to be men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.

Bro. Roberts when writing The Ecclesial Guide drew a lot from the Apostolic record. Consider this passage,

“There must be arrangement, and it must be the work of some in particular. If those appointed to do the work are called arranging brethren, it will be a literal description, and not a name of honour. Names of honour are to be avoided in the probationary stage of the body of Christ. **Seven is a convenient and scriptural number for purposes of management.** Their function would be to attend to all business matters connected with the operations of the ecclesia. Their qualifications would principally require to be of a practical order. But as the business they would have to do would be business with spiritual objects, **arranging brethren ought, above all things, to be men of a truly brotherly spirit, possessing a business turn, but chiefly the brotherly character.** It is not sufficient that they have a business turn: they must be brethren first, arranging brethren afterwards. This is the first qualification for all offices, a point liable to be overlooked in young ecclesias. If it be asked, how is a brotherly spirit to be known, the answer is, by the test of the commandments of Christ: are they obeyed? If SO! the man has a brotherly spirit. Are they not observed in the man's conduct? Then he is not a brotherly man, and not suitable for management, however great his practical abilities may be.”
(Clause 23)

We see in the Acts that these men were to attend to a very practical matter but nonetheless very important matters that could divide the ecclesia. It first and foremost needed men who were of good reputation and wisdom among the ecclesia.

Thus, we have in this example some guiding principles for our ecclesias. The Apostles gave themselves to the two other pillars of doctrine and prayer (Acts 2:42) and the ecclesia was actively involved in the decision. The result being that “the saying pleased the whole multitude” (v. 5 cp. v. 2). Here is our phrase which is going to connect two incidents for the ecclesia in the New Testament with two incidents for the ecclesia in the Old Testament.

Lead Up to Jerusalem Conference

After the conversion of Saul, the ecclesia had rest and multiplied again (Acts 9:31) but internal strife then starts in Acts 10. We are given a hint of the existence of the circumcision party in Acts 10:23, 45; 11:1-3, 18. There would be a short lived disagreement and reconciliation in Acts 11:2,18 but the problem would resurface in Acts 15.

The real expansion of the gospel starts in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). The Jerusalem ecclesia upon hearing of these things (‘when thou shalt hear’, Deut. 13:12) sends Barnabas to investigate. What was the purpose of sending Barnabas but to verify for themselves that these were truly brethren? These ecclesias then start a relationship with one another that would be respected and held as dear.

The ecclesia in Antioch though was its own autonomous entity. This can be seen by their gathering together in Acts 13:1-3 and commissioning the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. In verse 3, the “they” is the ecclesia. They gave their approval by laying their hands on the Apostles and sending them. We have seen this word before.⁷ Paul and Barnabas were commended to this work by the Antioch ecclesia and they had a responsibility to them. This is seen in Acts 14:26-27 as they come back,

“And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been **recommended** to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And **when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them**, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

This sets the stage for the next internal conflict for the ecclesias. The last one involved the ecclesia at Jerusalem but this one would involve two ecclesias. The last one was a problem with fellowship, but this would be a dispute about doctrine.

Acts 15

Since the initial brewing of trouble in Acts 11, the party of the circumcised had grown. Officially, the Jerusalem ecclesia had sent Barnabas (11:22) but these men (not ‘brethren’ Acts 15:1) seemed to have no such standing (15:24 “went out” not sent, cp. 1 John 2:19).⁸ They taught, “that except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” This incited a huge disputation between

⁷ See “[Letters of Commendation](#)”

⁸ In 15:5 they are called “certain of the sect of the Pharisees”. They are again not referenced as brethren which might imply how the Apostles viewed their standing in the ecclesia if they kept to this teaching.

these men on one side, Paul and Barnabas on the other and the ecclesia in the middle. This was a major battle as the word "dissension" is elsewhere translated "uproar" (Acts 19:40) describing the Ephesian mob who wanted to kill Paul.

What was to be done? "They (the ecclesia at Antioch) determined (or appointed) Paul, Barnabas and certain other to go up to Jerusalem" to settle the matter with the Jerusalem ecclesia. They were commended to be the ecclesial representatives which is seen by the use of the words "send" and "receive". The key word "send" in verse 3 is disguised in the KJV,

"And being **brought** on their way by the church..."

The Greek word for "brought" here is *propempo* and all modern translations use the word "sent". Therefore, Paul and Barnabas did not go of their own accord but were sent by the Antioch ecclesia. As we have already seen, this word implies a recommendation by the sending party especially when paired with the act of "receiving", which we have in verse 4.

"And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were **received** of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them."

We should not take the manner of this as a casual exchange. There is an intentional "sending" and "receiving" being done. There is no mention of a letter of commendation, but we can assume with some confidence that there was one. There is no assumption that Paul and Barnabas could be representatives of their own accord. The Antioch ecclesia granted them that position and the Jerusalem ecclesia welcomed them on that basis.

The order of the words in verse 4 is interesting as they are received first by the church and secondly by the apostles and elders. It is interesting because the order is reversed in verse 22.

"Then pleased it **the apostles and elders, with the whole church**, to **send** chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren"

It was only the "apostles and elders" (v. 6) who came together to consider the matter but in the end the decision "pleased" the whole ecclesia. That is, they were not left out of the decision process and approved to "send" (*pempo*) their own representatives back to Antioch. The letter they⁹ composed was therefore a declaration of their decision but also a letter of recommendation for those who carried it.

(Act 15:25-27) "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to **send (pempo)** chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, (26) Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (27) We have **sent (apostello)** therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth."

⁹ Notice the letter is written by "the apostles and elders **and brethren**" indicating that the ecclesia was also included in the formal formation of the words sent to all the ecclesias.

They had come together and sat through what I believe must have been hours and hours of disputing (15:7) to come to a decision that “pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church” (15:22). This was the same result they had obtained in chapter 6:5, “the saying pleased the whole multitude”.

We really have nothing else to compare as an ecclesial example then these two incidents in Acts... or do we? That saying, “pleased the whole multitude” (6:5) is interesting. There are two times in the Old Testament where the children of Israel are gathered together as an ecclesia, to take part in a decision which would please them. One is during the time of David and the other with Hezekiah. Many times Israel is described as an ecclesia but only twice (that I could find) does it say they were pleased with the decision.

David and the Ecclesia

The first example is in 1 Chr. 13:1-5 from the Brenton LXX translation.

“And David took counsel with the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, even with every commander. (2) And David said to **the whole congregation (ecclesia) of Israel**, if it seem good to you, and it should be prospered by the Lord our God, **let us send to our brethren** that are left in all the land of Israel, and let the priests the Levites who are with them in the cities of their possession come, and let them be gathered to us. (3) And let us bring over to us the ark of our God; for men have not enquired at it since the days of Saul. (4) And **all the congregation (ecclesia)** said that they would do thus; for **the saying was right in the eyes of all the people**.¹⁰ (5) So David **assembled (execclesiasen)** all Israel, from the borders of Egypt even to the entering in of Hemath, to bring in the ark of God from the city of Jarim.”

The word “congregation” in verses 2 and 4 in the LXX is ecclesia (Hebrew qahal). It is so interesting that at this time David involves the whole ecclesia of Israel in this decision. He started by saying, “if it seems good to you.” He was asking their approval to do something momentous. Would he have gone through with it if the people did not approve? But they did as the “saying was right in the eyes of all the people”, that is, the saying pleased the whole ecclesia.

They put the ark on a cart pulled by oxen. There was great rejoicing and music. But when they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to steady the ark and the Lord struck him down right there. The thing which they all agreed to do, which seemed so right, went so wrong. The image of Uzza lying there must have been seared into David’s conscience. He became angry (v. 11) and then his feelings turned to fear (v. 12). This was a great tragedy for the ecclesia yet there was a reason.

This kind of thing had happened before in the ecclesia with Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire (Lev. 10). It would happen again for the early ecclesia when Ananias and Sapphira lied about their offering (Acts 5) and God struck them down too. The effect was the same in that “great fear came upon

¹⁰ This side of the story is not mention in the 2 Samuel 6 record.

all the ecclesia, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:11). It all speaks of the great fear and carefulness we should have in our ecclesias to make sure we are following the word of God.

They had not done it in the proper way. Were they ignorant of what was required? If not, then were they lackadaisical in their thinking that a “new cart” (v. 7) was good enough? The ark of God sat for three months as David carefully worked it back and figured out what went wrong.

In chapter 15:12-13 he says to the Levites about to bring up the ark,

“Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. **For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.**”

David readily acknowledges his role in the mistake by saying “**we** sought him not after the due order.” There are times when we as ecclesias can make a mistake collectively. We have to go back to the word and set things right. That is what David did and they were able to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem with joy.

Hezekiah and the Ecclesia

The next example also has an important lesson. It is found in 2 Chr. 30, reading again from the Brenton LXX translation.

“And Ezekias sent to all Israel and Juda, and wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasse, that they should come into the house of the Lord to Jerusalem, to keep the passover to the Lord God of Israel. (2) For the king, and the princes, and **all the congregation (ecclesia) in Jerusalem**, designed to keep the passover in the second month. (3) For they could not keep it at that time, because a sufficient number of priest had not purified themselves, and the people was not gathered to Jerusalem. (4) And **the proposal pleased the king and the congregation (ecclesia).**”

Here we have again, the word “congregation” which is ecclesia in the LXX and qahal in the Hebrew. They came together in this order “king, princes and ecclesia” much like in Acts we have “apostles, elders and ecclesia.” Their decision is also made together as something that pleases everyone. They then send out letters to all their brethren. Some mocked but some humbled themselves and came. Isn’t the summation in verse 12 beautiful?

“And the hand of the Lord was present to give them **one heart** to come, to do according to the commands of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord. (13) And a great multitude were gathered to Jerusalem to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, **a very great congregation (ecclesia).**” (Brenton LXX)

“The hand of the Lord was present to give them one heart”¹¹ sounds like something from Acts (“of one accord”). In fact there are some remarkable similarities with Acts 15.

2 Chr. 30	Acts 15	Similarity
v. 4	v. 22-23	It pleased the whole ecclesia
v. 5-6	v. 23,30	Declaration by letter
v. 12	v. 25	One heart, one accord*
v. 23	v. 32	Comforted, exhorted
v. 23	v. 30	The whole ecclesia
v. 23	v. 31	Gladness and rejoicing

Here again we have a picture of the ecclesia, a “very great congregation”, in harmony and joyous celebration but there is a problem. There were many in the ecclesia who were not sanctified to eat the Passover. They did not do it in the proper order according to the word. Did God strike them down like Uzza? No he didn’t, and we read why in verses 18-19.

“For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover **otherwise than it was written**. But **Hezekiah prayed for them**, saying, The good LORD pardon (*Heb. kaphar, make atonement*) every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.”

There are some similarities to what went on during David’s time but there is this striking contrast for a different outcome. Hezekiah knew that they were not following the word of God. He knew what was right. He knew there would be consequences if he did not pray. He interceded for this one time and God heard and healed the people. It would not be that way next year. They would be prepared and sanctified. There are circumstances where we come up short. God knows. If we acknowledge his way, he will guide us to walk with him in light. There are times for exceptions but let them not become the rule. We cannot become so wrapped up in rules that we deny the principle. That is not how God acts as we see here because he recognizes Hezekiah’s prayer and heals the people (v. 20)

If that was not enough the ecclesia makes another decision in verse 23,

“And **the whole assembly (LXX ecclesia)** took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness.”

Oh, what an unbelievable joyous time it was for this ecclesia. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our ecclesias were the same?

¹¹ The KJV has, “in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart.”

Conclusion

The ecclesia is a powerful concept. Let us never make this word commonplace and our association together trivial. If we honestly believe the word of Jesus, “I will build my ecclesia”, then we stand in his very presence as his workmanship. He walks among the candlesticks and we must never let those lights go out. We must stand by the example of the ecclesia of old, continuing steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer. We have our problems just like they did, and we have to find that way to be of “one accord”. Our ecclesias must uphold the word of God, acknowledge our faults, pray for forgiveness so that we might rejoice together in what truly is the fellowship of the Lord.

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