

A Brief Look at the Phrase "The Clergy"

Last Updated August, 2011

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The "Clergy"

"There is but one place to be found in the holy scripture, where the word *clerus* (κληρος [G2819]) can properly be applied to the church, and they have got it to themselves; from whence they call themselves the clergy, that is, the inheritance or heritage of God."

- William Penn, *No Cross No Crown*, AR Pg. 173; Pg. 166 (1853 reprint)

Study on "clergy" in scripture

Klay'-ros [G2819]

A *die* (for drawing chances); by implication a *portion* (as if so secured); by extension an *acquisition* (especially a *patrimony*, figuratively): - heritage, inheritance, lot, part.

Occurrences of G2819 in scripture:

Mat. 27:35

Mar. 15:24

Luke 23:24

John 19:24

Acts 1:17, 25, 26; 8:21; 26:18

Col. 1:12

1 Pet. 5:3

Mostly translated as the "lot" it is also used on these occasions:

(when referring to the lot or "part" someone has in a ministry)

Acts 1:17 "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained **part** of this ministry."

(Speaking of Judas, who by transgression fell from his position and lost his "lot" or part among the disciples)

Acts 1:23-25 "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take **part** of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

(when referring to the common "inheritance" redeemed believers have)

Acts 26:16-18 "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and **inheritance** among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Colossians 1:12 "...the Father...hath made us meet to be partakers of the **inheritance** of the saints in light"

(when referring to God's heritage, the "lot" of the Lord {we are God's lot!})

1 Peter 5:1-3 "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over *God's heritage*, but being ensamples to the flock."

Klay'-ros, therefore, used biblically, refers to what a person or group gets by lot, part, portion, inheritance, or heritage. Oversimplified, **klay'-ros is what a person gets**. When looking at it's proper use, we must look at who the person possessing it is.

Klay'-ros can refer to the inheritance allotted to all the saints, the heritage allotted (by the Lord) to the Lord, or a believer's place in a ministry (given to them by the Lord).

Out of these three usages of klay'-ros when referring to a person or people, it's only two possible biblical uses as "clergy" (as seen in Roman Catholic circles) are shared by all true believers in Christ and therefore no distinction may be made from a biblical standpoint that differentiates the clergy from other believers in Christ.

1. As belonging to (i.e. the heritage or inheritance of) the Lord. If this is the way it's being used, then are all true believers "clergy." Any distinction made between them and other true believers has been taken from an un-biblical basis.

2. As belonging to (i.e. the heritage or inheritance of) the saints. If this is the way it's being used, and a true believer or group of true believers can "belong" to the saints*, then any distinction made between clergy and other true believers is again taken from an un-biblical basis; all true believers would still be considered "clergy."

* John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 3:20-23.

You can be *given* an inheritance *by* the LORD (such as *getting* a place *in* a ministry), and you can *be* an inheritance *to* the LORD, but you cannot *be* a place *in* a ministry.

Since one biblical use of the word klay'-ros can be in referring to a person's place in a ministry, and as not everyone is afforded a position in every group or ministry (i.e. while Christ walked the earth there were *many* disciples, but only 12 apostles) a somewhat elite status seems to be implied. However, this could only be used as *having* a klay'-ros, and not in *being* a klay'-ros, when applied to someone's place in a group or ministry. You cannot *be* a klay'-ros in a ministry; you can only *have* a klay'-ros in a ministry. Therefore, using clergy to refer to an elite group of ministers of Christ as differentiated from other believers in Christ is at best poor grammar. The term is being wrongly used.

However, since klay'-ros refers not only to a person's place in a ministry, but also to the heritage of the Lord (which includes every believer) depending on it's usage and possessor, klay'-ros may be used both in specifying the elite place given to a particular member of a group or ministry, as well as referring to those known as the heritage of the Lord (which again includes every true believer in Christ).

"The clergy," as presented in Roman Catholic circles (and some others bearing similar beliefs), refers to a group of believers thought to be the New Covenant equivalent to the Levitical priesthood of the Old Covenant. The Levites weren't allotted a portion among the rest of the children of Israel (Numbers 18:20), the LORD Himself being their portion and inheritance. Because they were the full-time, religious ministers of the Covenant, they were allotted a tenth of the best of what came in to their brothers, to live off. They were the priests of the holy people of God. And the clergy, in Roman Catholic thought is the modern, New Covenant equivalent of the priesthood. They receive a tithe from those that aren't considered full-time, religious ministers of the Covenant, but yet are still a part of The Church.

The "Laity"

The word "laity" comes from the Greek word "laos" (λαὸς [G2992]) which means "the people." As the only true members of the Church are the "people of God," then are all true "clergy" also "laity."

For there is no difference. All are one in Christ Jesus. There is neither bond nor free, male nor female, Jew nor Greek. All are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-29)

If "laity" is taken to mean "the (unredeemed or common) people" (the unholy within the social/political structure of the temporal Church) then the difference between clergy and laity may have some valid implications. But since "laity" refers to the redeemed people of God (i.e. "the saints," all true believers in Christ) there is no true difference between the two when using them in a biblical way or from a scriptural basis.

If clergy and laity are to be used biblically, rather than according to Roman Catholic/historical usage, the division between clergy and laity would be the same division that exists between the redeemed and unredeemed, believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, holy and unholy. Both alike may be a part of a church in particular, but only those who have lot, part, and inheritance among God's people and who are themselves the heritage of the Lord are truly a part of The Church (the body of Christ made up of all true believers). So the closest

thing, biblically, we have to the term "clergy," involves the idea of every person rightly considered a part of the Lord's people. They not only have an inheritance among His people, but are themselves His inheritance.

"The clergy" in it's common usage is therefore a post-apostolic/modern invention, an artificially created way of dividing full-time New Covenant ministers from other members of the Church.

Summary

The closest word we have in the bible to the word *clergy* is *klay'-ros*, from whence it is assumed to be derived. When used in reference to the inheritance or heritage of the Lord, every genuine child of God must be included as a part of it!

From a Biblical standpoint, all true believers are already considered clergy by God.

Not only that, but all full-time New Covenant ministers may also be considered laity, seeing as laity from a Biblical standpoint refers to the redeemed people of God!

If you are a child of God, you fall into both categories simultaneously. You are and may rightly be considered a part of both the clergy and the laity without any ecclesiastical inconsistency. You belong to God, and are a part of His people.