

Sanctification And Holiness (Part 1)

We Are Called to Be Priests

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Given 23-Jun-01; Sermon #508

This is going to be the first sermon in a series primarily on sanctification and holiness. I will be stressing the parallel between Israel's and the church's responsibilities under both covenants. In it there will be elements of the priesthood, the sacrifices and offerings, and will be combined eventually with the "odd year" Pentecost issue.

This is being given in order to supply you with more information as to why I believe the way that I do regarding how Pentecost is counted in these odd years, but we will not reach the Pentecost issue today because I believe that a great deal of groundwork must be covered in order to establish the importance of holiness.

We are going to begin with an element that I spent time on at the beginning of the sermon that I gave on June 2, 2001 ["Grace, Unleavened Bread, and the Holy Spirit"]. The purpose of that sermon was to show that, without realizing it, we have just assumed that we knew perfectly well why we keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. But the reality is that we knew it *imperfectly*, that it was missing a vital, perfectly clear piece of understanding, that piece of understanding being that we keep the Days of Unleavened Bread as a celebration of what *God* does, because *He* brings us out, not merely that we *come* out, and are to continue to come out of this world's system and sin.

I want to review this with you by asking you to turn to Exodus 13.

Exodus 13:3 And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

That kind of phraseology, especially that last phrase—"there shall no leavened bread be eaten," is tied to what the *LORD* did in order that we understand why we are to do what we do.

Exodus 13:7-9 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with you, neither shall there be leaven seen with you in all your quarters. And you shall show your son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the *LORD* did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto you upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that the *LORD'S* law may be in your mouth: for with a strong hand has the *LORD* brought you out of Egypt.

Over and over, Moses keeps reporting this very important piece of information. You eat unleavened bread because of what the *LORD* did.

Exodus 13:14 And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What is this? That you shall say unto him, By strength of hand the *LORD* brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.

There it is! That is about the fifth time he has said that.

Exodus 13:11 And it shall be when the *LORD* shall bring you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore unto you and to your fathers, and shall give it you, . . .

I will not read the rest, but the implication is that we are to understand that when Israel finally came into the land, God made it possible for them to come into the land. In other words, it was because of what the Lord did, not only in Egypt, but also in the wilderness, that enabled them to get into the land. It is what the Lord does.

I want to stress to you that this is not a minor bit of trivia. It is not merely that we come out, but rather this puts everything regarding our coming out, our growth and overcoming, and eventually going into the Kingdom of God,

into its proper perspective, because human nature is ever ready to take the credit for more than it actually does.

I want you to see what Paul said, in its proper context, and *why* he said what he said. Go to I Corinthians 1. I know that you will understand the context here by just reading verse 26.

I Corinthians 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.

I Corinthians 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

I just said human nature is ever ready to take the credit for more than it actually did.

I Corinthians 1:30-31 But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

Let him glory *not* in human nature—glory not in what he has done by way of works—but "let him glory in the Lord."

I am going to summarize what Paul said here, and put it into a little bit different configuration of words. Paul said, "It is because of what the *Father* did. It is because of His work that we are *in* Christ, and because *in* Christ are all the riches of salvation. All that we are that is right, we owe to them; therefore, if we are going to glory, let us 'glory in the Lord.'" Maybe this will give us a little better understanding why Paul said what he did in Ephesians 2: 10.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Ephesians 2:9 Not of works [implying *our* works], lest any man should boast.

Does that sound familiar with the context of I Corinthians 1? It sure does.

I am going to use a little bit more of a base term than the word "created," and that base term is that we are *manufactured* goods, and we are in that sense machines created to glorify the Creator.

I do not care whether it is Mrs. Fields and her cookies, or Famous Amos and his cookies, or Bill Gates with his operating system, or Thomas Alva Edison and his thousand or so inventions, or Marconi who invented the radio—their inventions would not exist if they did not create them. The invention neither willed nor worked itself into being. After they created those things, their creation brought *them* honor and glory.

It may be humbling for us to think of ourselves as an invention, or as a machine, but the principle that I am speaking of here is essentially true in spirit in reference to our relationship with God. If we do not understand and believe this, it moves us to overemphasize what *we* do, and we create our own brand of an evolutionary works religion. That is why Paul said "not of works." All the while, the truth and reality is that what the Father and Son have been doing is enabling us to do what we do. No invention of man would do what it does unless the inventor worked and created and put the ability within that invention to do what it does. That is the principle we are dealing with here.

It is God who invents us through a process that we call "conversion." If the Father and Son did not do what *They* do before we do what *we* do, we would never do what we do. I am talking here about things that have to do with salvation, with conversion, with growth and overcoming. If *They* did not do what *They* do before what we do what *we* do, we would never do what we do. All along the way *They* are preparing us—from the calling all the way to the Kingdom of God—and *that* is the major lesson to be rehearsed at the beginning of each Sacred Year during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

This understanding gives the whole salvation process the proper footing, and it orients our thinking regarding our relationship with God in the proper

direction. This must be done because it is very easy for pride to slip in, and we begin thinking too much of ourselves, since we do play a small part in our creation.

What we are looking at here is a major aspect of grace. It is God's grace that is to be celebrated during Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. That is the reality. Therefore, if we are going to glory, we should glory in the Lord, in what He is creating in us, enabling us to do an imitation of Him.

Now with that foundation, in the same manner as we have come to more fully understand the keeping of the Days of Unleavened Bread, there are also things regarding Pentecost that we thought we had perfectly nailed down, but the truth is that there were missing pieces regarding it as well. These missing pieces are regarding the subject that we are going to be addressing in this short series.

Sanctification is the Bible's term for the state or condition and process of being separated from others for God's purposes, and it is a major step in making it possible for us to carry out our responsibilities in this process. In the Bible's usage, sanctification is at one and the same time both a result of God's calling and an active ongoing process. At one and the same time it is a condition. It is a result of God's calling, and it is also a process that continues. Once it is started, it does not stay static. It is a dynamic process in which sanctification continues and becomes more and more refined.

The basic meaning of sanctify is "to set apart," or "to separate away." To a rancher it would mean to cut a certain animal away from a flock or a herd. Families often have special things that it uses only on certain occasions. Perhaps it might be a set of dishes, or silverware, or tools, or maybe an automobile, or certain clothing. We all do this in some manner or form, and this illustrates the concept of separating one thing, or many things, and putting them to a specific use at a specific time. Let us apply this to religion. Our calling by God begins the condition and the process of sanctification for *His* purpose of salvation and the creating of Himself in us.

Exodus 6:6-8 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and **I** will bring you out from under the burdens of the

Egyptians, and *I* will rid you out of their bondage, and *I* will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And *I* will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, which brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And *I* will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

This very clearly states who it is who begins and ends the entire process: the One who said "*I*." Seven times He states what He will accomplish, and each one of those statements pertains to some aspect of sanctification.

What I want you to notice especially is that God did not make these proclamations to the Egyptians. It was only made to those people that He wanted to sanctify. These stated objectives, followed by God's acts in fulfilling them, separated and distinguished the called Israelites from the *uncalled* Egyptians specifically, but He had also distinguished the called Israelites from any *others* that they came in contact with on their journey to the Promised Land.

They came in contact with other nations as well. You know the names of some of those people: the Moabites, the Ammonites, and eventually the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and all of those others that they met along the way. It was *the calling* and acts of God that separated them from the Egyptians, and then separated them, step by step as God fulfilled His promises here, from every other uncalled people that they came in contact with. Israel was different. Israel was "cut away from" the whole herd of nations that were out there. Israel was cut away for a special purpose. They were sanctified; set apart.

I want you also to note that neither the Israelites nor any of the other nations had any choice in the matter of whom God calls, or whom God chose to do what, or to or for whom. God is sovereign, and He made the choice. It was an act of His love, of His grace that separated the Israelites away from the others. It was not by works of the Israelites, and it was not by works that

they made it into the Promised Land. It was what God did that gradually predisposed each to make the choice that they did, whether it was the Israelites, or the Egyptians.

It was what God did that led those people to make the choices that they did. They still had free moral agency, but God was making it clear what He wanted each person's choice to be, and so the Israelites overwhelmingly chose to follow Moses. Would you not? God enabled them to make that choice. He did not do the same thing for the Egyptians. He did not give them the same inclination to go in that direction, and so they went in the direction that human nature would take it to go. What we are seeing here is that sanctification, or the setting apart of people by God for some special use, is an ancient and clearly revealed pattern in the Bible.

We could begin by going all the way back to Enoch and to Noah, who were clearly set apart by God, sanctified by Him for deliverance in the saving of their lives, and thus the pattern begins, but we are going to go to Genesis 12. This is exceedingly clear.

Genesis 12:1-2 NOW the LORD had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

God sanctified Abraham from his family and his country for the objective of establishing a more specific direction as He laid the foundation of the family and the nation through whom He will work out that purpose. A simple question: Would this have happened to Abraham if God had not done what He did? The answer to that is obvious. What I want you to see clearly is that it is what *God* does that triggers what *we* do. You can see that so clearly with Abraham here. Now would we ever come out if God did not do what *He* does? No, we would not.

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

The scale was much larger than what He did with Abraham, where it only involved Abraham and his family. Now we see Abraham's family beginning to grow quite great, and so God calls out a group of people, physically—the descendants of Abraham—and He calls them "His son." He not only named them that, but He called them "out of Egypt."

Turn now to Matthew 2:14, which tells the story of Jesus' birth and the things that occurred after it.

Matthew 2:14-15 When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young child [Jesus] and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Why do you suppose Matthew wrote what he did? Again, God is continuing our understanding of sanctification. Even *Jesus* was called out of Egypt! Now who precipitated that? God did. That is what Matthew is saying there. That whole sequence of events that led to Joseph's fleeing to Egypt was set up by God that the prophecy in Hosea 11:1—"Out of Egypt have I called my son"—might be fulfilled. God separated Israel from Egypt, calling them "His son." God separated Jesus from Egypt as well.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him; and I will raise him [the drawn one] up at the last day.

So now *we*, and the church, fit into the same pattern as Enoch, as Noah, as Abraham, as Israel, as individuals who make up the church. All of us are called out, drawn by the grace of God—an act of love on His part—that separates us from the rest of the world and puts us in a position in relation to Him that the uncalled do not have the privilege of being part of. We had no control, as it were, over this, and neither do the uncalled. "Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated." You are a living fulfillment of that prophecy. *You* has God loved. The uncalled has He not loved.

Did God have to work miracles and do things far beyond human capability to break Israel's bondage to Pharaoh and to Egypt? Of course He did. Now in order to break us away so that we are separated from the herd, as it were, God had to do similar things spiritually to break our bondage to Satan and this world so that we are set apart. This is no little thing. It is because of what the *Lord* does that we are separated from the world. Miracles have to occur, or we would never be separated, and those miracles begin with our calling.

The Greek word translated into the English as "assembly," or "church," depending upon which version of the Bible one uses, is *ecclesia*, and it means "a calling," "a summons" to an assembly. The purpose of the calling out, or the separation, from others is determined by the context in which *ecclesia* appears, and thus it can even be applied to a mob of people who are summoned by curiosity over some exciting thing happening in the neighborhood. That is exactly the way it is used in the book of Acts in one place. People were drawn by some exciting thing, perhaps a riot that was taking place in the city.

It can apply to people summoned by the attraction of a theater show. It does not necessarily have a formal summons in mind, but in *our* case the Bible makes sure that we understand that our calling is very definitely specific and formal. We are summoned to be separated away from the world.

Now over time this word *ecclesia* came to be applied to the Christian assembly or congregation during the first century in order to distinguish them from the Jews of the Synagogue. The word itself has absolutely no direct connection to the church, but by common usage it came to be understood as implying *those called and separated from the world*, and thus we talk about "the church." But in Greek, all it means is "those summoned." The implication is, unwritten, *summoned by God*; summoned to be separated away from the world; summoned to be separated to have God Himself reproduced in us.

There is one more step needed for us to understand, and that is the usage of the Hebrew and the Greek words translated into various forms of the word "sanctify." Sanctify is the verb. Sanctification is the noun application of that word. The word "sanctify" strongly implies cleanliness, purity,

blamelessness, sacredness; and thus the English terms that come into play are: holy, holiness, consecration, devoted, dedicated. You will find those words scattered throughout the Bible.

If you care to look in *Strong's*, you are very likely going to be led to the exact same word that is also translated somewhere else as "sanctify" or "sanctification." It is just that the context in which it is translated into the word "holy" or "holiness" demands that it be absolutely associated with cleanliness, purity, consecration, and devotion to God. We must understand then, even when we see the more base term "sanctify" or "sanctification," that there is also implied within this the sense of holiness, purity, and sacred use.

We are going to go back to the book of Revelation to pick up one verse, because here is the next step.

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.

When God separated Abraham and his family from his family and his country, and when God separated Israel from Egypt, their sanctification was also geographical. He literally moved them from one place on earth to another. His purpose was to establish a new community of people all involved in the same purpose. Now with the church, our separation is not geographical, but is spiritual, moral, and ethical, while still living geographically within the system that we were born into. We must become separated from the way, from the manner, from the lifestyle, from the attitudes of the system that we were born into, and *moved* to make God's way, His manner, His system, His attitude ours. That is how we "come out."

They literally moved geographically. Some of us may move geographically, but that is not really what God has in mind. What He has in mind is a spiritual, moral, ethical, and attitudinal departure from our friends, our neighbors, our family, the gang we ran with, or whatever. We are called then to be different.

The concept for us of God's separating, making holy, and establishing a new community, is not lost. The community aspect is merely reserved until a later time. Under the New Covenant the community is the Kingdom of God. It is a goal being moved toward as He prepares those He has set apart to be set into that new community.

So where are we headed? To the Kingdom of God. Are we headed there geographically? No. We stay right where we are, but we still "come out." We are still sanctified by a change of attitude, a change of practice, a change of conduct. Instead of immoral, we become moral. Instead of being unethical, we become ethical. Instead of being spiritual in the sense of the way Satan is spiritual, we become spiritual in the way God is spiritual. That is our "coming out." That is why we are set apart. Geography at this time has little or nothing to do with the overwhelming majority of the people who are sanctified.

In Exodus 19 we have that occasion that takes place just before the making of the covenant. God is proposing this to the Israelites.

Exodus 19:4-6 You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 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 priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

We will probably be coming back here a couple of different times to keep touching base with what the Israelites went through, because there is a parallel here between them and us. In one sense not a great deal was changed between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. This is God's proposal to them: "If you do this, then I will do this."

Turn now to I Peter 2. We will begin to see the parallel here.

I Peter 2:5 You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

There is a very close similarity between the two. The major difference between the two, which does not really show up strongly at this point, is a contrast between physical/spiritual. For example: *Physical*: the Old Covenant. Israel was moved from one location to another. It was a physical setting apart. *Spiritual*: We go nowhere geographically, but we "come out" spiritually. The difference between the two, even though the wording is very similar, shows us being set apart, not for geographical separation, but for spiritual separation. It is a contrast: physical/spiritual.

Another way of putting it is this. You might run into this in somebody else's explanation. The Old Covenant was *outward*. The New Covenant is *inward*. The Old Covenant was national and temporal. The New Covenant is heavenly and eternal.

You will notice that both descriptions contain the word "peculiar." In neither case does it mean peculiar in the sense of odd, weird, or strange. However, the uncalled might think that you are odd. They might think that you are weird. They might think that you are strange. But that is not the way God writes this. Remember, He is looking at it from His perspective, and His perspective is the way that we need to look at it so that we have the correct understanding.

The Exodus word, the Hebrew word, that is translated into the word "peculiar" puts more emphasis more directly on the sense of "special." We are special in that sense. The I Peter word puts more emphasis on how we

became that way, and that is that we are a special purchased possession of God.

If you have a Bible that marks paragraphs, you will see that a new paragraph began in I Peter 2:4. The key verb in this paragraph, which runs to the end of verse 8, is translated "built up." It appears in verse 5. It is an action in progress. It is being "built up." It is active. It is a dynamic word. It is indicating that the building is being done by somebody else. We are living stones. Step away from human beings and think of stones out in a field, or think of a pile of bricks if you want to.

Think of a construction job, because that is the illustration Peter is using here. In his mind's eye, as he was writing this, he saw a literal building being built by a stone mason, only the stone mason is God and His Son Jesus Christ. So we are being "built up." The stones are not taking themselves out of the field, shaping themselves, and fitting themselves into the building. That does not fit the illustration. Somebody else is picking up the stones, knocking off the rough edges, and then fitting them exactly into the place where the builder wants them to go. What Peter is describing here is a building that is not going up haphazardly, but according to an intelligent plan, as if he is working according to a blueprint drawn in advance before the construction even begins.

You will find in verse 6 the "chief cornerstone" is mentioned, and like the chief cornerstone, each of us, as living stones, are being individually set apart from all of the other rocks that are in the field, prepared and fitted into what is called "a house." The word "house" simply means a dwelling place, and since this is a spiritual house, it means "a dwelling place for God." The picture that Peter wants us to get is that individually, and in the church as an institution, each one of those stones is picked individually and drawn out of the field, fitted and shaped, and put into the building.

Again you see the sense of sanctification at work. All you have to do is get a picture of that stone mason looking over a selection of stones in a field, but only choosing certain ones which he then works on and fits into the building. But in the sense of this verse, we are being fit into a suitable dwelling place

for God—individually, and as an institution, as a church. This begins to put responsibilities on each one of the *living stones* that are set apart, and made a part of the dwelling place for God.

I Peter 1:15 But as he which has called you [summoned you, cut you away from the crowd] is holy; . . .

The translators translated the word that they might have used as "sanctify" in another situation, but in this it demands that it be translated into "holy," because the context is stressing cleanliness, purity, blamelessness. "But as He which has called you is holy." Is God holy? Is God clean? Is God pure? Of course He is.

I Peter 1:15-16 . . . so be you holy in all manner of conversation [or conduct]; because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy.

Those who are associated with God, those who are set apart by Him to be a dwelling place, He demands that they be holy as *He* is holy; not merely set apart, but set apart and clean. Now we are getting into the area of conduct, and our separation is away from those who are not clean, not pure spiritually as God is.

Again we see the implied meaning of sanctification coming into play, because in order to be a suitable dwelling place for God we have to become holy as He is holy. We have to become holy then in the sense of clean—a clean life, as well as in our sacrifices. I say sacrifices, because it says in I Peter 2:5 that we are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

We have to be holy in the sense of clean living, as well as in our sacrifices being made acceptable, having to do with being made holy by Jesus Christ; that is, through His work made possible by means of the blood of His sacrifice as a man, and then His continuing work of sacrifice as our High Priest before God as our Mediator and Intercessor. This then opens up our present responsibility, which we will not get to too much, because we are still laying groundwork here. We will not touch on this much until the end of the sermon.

In verse 5 it states that we—all of us—are being built up as a clean, holy, pure, blameless spiritual house and priesthood. Let us add to this verse 9. "We are a chosen generation, a *royal* priesthood." The priesthood word in verse 5 is embellished by saying it is not merely a priesthood, but it is a royal priesthood. We have two things here. There is the illustration of a house, which is passive. It is being worked *on*. There is the illustration of *priesthood*, which is the active part of the stones that are being selected away from, set apart, from all the other stones in the field.

Now what are we supposed to do in our responsibility as a priest? It says here that "we have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light *in order to show forth the praises of Him who has called us.*"

We are beginning to see, step by step, what the responsibility of the church is. It is all revolving around sanctification, being built up as a house, and actively performing the work of a priest.

Is the ministry a priesthood? Yes, it is. But everybody in the church is part of the same priesthood. The ministry is an administrative office with a special responsibility *within* the priesthood to teach others who are a part of the same priesthood that they are.

We are going to go back to Deuteronomy, back to Israel again, to see what God had to say about the Israelites, because this keeps building out and building out. All this instruction that is in the Old Testament is to give us understanding as to what our job is to be, and the way God thinks about us, and what He is doing.

Deuteronomy 7:1-11 When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land whither you go to possess it, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you: [Think about I Corinthians 1:26. We are the weakest of people. Well, so was Israel.] And when the LORD your God shall deliver them before you; you shall smite them, and utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shall you make marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give

unto his son, nor his daughter shall you take unto your son. For they will turn away your son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy you suddenly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For you are an holy people [set apart] unto the LORD your God: [That makes a big difference.] The LORD your God has chosen you [I Peter 2:9—"You are a chosen generation."] to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you ["Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated."], and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations: And repays them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face. You shall therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments which I command you this day, to do them.

In verses 1 through 5, God makes stringent demands on the Israelites whom He has set apart. Why He has done this is given in verses 6 through 8. The reason is because they are a sanctified, holy, special people set apart for God Himself and *His* purpose.

Incidentally, that word in the *King James Version* translated "above" is an unfortunate translation. It simply means that God chose them out of all that were available. It does not mean that the Israelites were greater or better. That is what the word "above" seems to imply. But rather they were in the position that they were only because God chose to give them love. They were not better or greater. That is the whole point. We are not to get puffed up by what we have.

In verses 9 through 11 He makes clear the responsibility that falls upon them as a result of Him setting them apart. That responsibility is that they [*we*] are to keep, to observe *His* commandments. The emphasis is on the word "His," because the world has its own commandments, its own statutes, and its own judgments. We are to bring emphasis to the setting apart by doing that.

Doing His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments will accomplish two primary objectives in God's purpose.

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and he that formed you, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are mine.

This is spoken to the sanctified people.

Isaiah 43:7 Even every one that is called by my name: [We are "the sons of God." Hosea 11:1 said Israel was His son.] For I have created him [There we are, manufactured goods! God's invention.], for my glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.

Isaiah 43:9-10 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, it is truth. You are my witnesses, . . .

Here we come to our responsibility. We are God's witnesses of what? God has set us apart to witness, and if we keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that witness will be accomplished.

Isaiah 43:10 . . . says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He. . .

Our God **is** God. Our God **is** the Creator.

Isaiah 43:10-12 . . . Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are my witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God.

That is the job of the "set-apart" ones. It does not mean that we have to go out on a street corner and shout it to the world. What we have to do is **live it!** That will show that we are *set apart*. That will prove that *we are the holy ones*.

Now all the while that this is going on, the second operation is taking place at the same time as the witness is being made. We are going to just cut this short and give you the activity that is involved, and you can figure out the rest yourself, because it is easy once you begin to see it.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. . .

The stones are being chipped away at, and molded and shaped into the design that the Creator wants for them to be so that He can fit them into the place that He has set apart for them to be in. He is creating them.

If we keep His commandments, if we keep His statutes, if we keep His judgments, the witness will be made, and the creation will take place.

II Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away: behold, all things are becoming new.

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all [To whom is this written? To whom is Paul saying this? He is saying this to the church.], with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [Do you see

God?], are changed [are transformed] into the same image [the image of God] from glory to glory [the glory of man to the glory of God] even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Ephesians 2:10 fits right here again. "We are His workmanship created unto good works." What are those good works? To keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments. In doing so we witness that our God *is* God, and as we do this, He is forming and shaping us spiritually to enable us to perform the very things He has commanded us to do: keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments.

Now a reminder again from I Peter 2:5, 9. He has given us a specific area of responsibility, and it is within a royal priesthood, offering up acceptable sacrifices. This responsibility was also mentioned in Exodus 19:6 where He says, "And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." We are looking then at the specific areas of *privilege* and *responsibility*.

The privilege opened up because God separated us from the world, and He has given us the *privilege* of being a priest under Jesus Christ. That responsibility bears obligation and duties that have to be performed: keeping His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments. One of those commandments is that we are to offer up acceptable sacrifices by Jesus Christ. So we are a special, chosen, holy, clean possession of God, and we are to bear a priestly character in relation to Him and to the world.

Under the New Covenant *only* is it stated that we are a "royal" priesthood. This is because we are all part of a royal Family—the Family, the nation, the Kingdom of God. We are in the Kingdom of God, as it clearly says in Colossians 1 that "we have been translated into the kingdom of His dear Son." That was stated to church members *before* they are ever resurrected. The biblical proof gives us the truth that we are already in the Kingdom of God. Now is the Kingdom of God on earth? Not in its full sense. Not at all. That will not occur until Jesus Christ returns.

I want to show us an interesting and simple overview description of what a priest does. This is very important. With this the sermon for today will end, and we will carry on, God willing, in a couple of weeks from now.

We might call the priesthood *our area of work*. From your background of studying, where do you picture a priest doing his work? Is it not at the Tabernacle, or the Temple? In your mind's eye you picture a priest laboring at the altar, sacrificing. Do you not? Sure you do. Now why is he laboring there? A simple and a correct answer is that this is where God, in the Bible, is symbolically pictured as living. Remember the dwelling place analogy? Whose dwelling place are we being fitted into? It is God's. Where does He live? He lives in you. Collectively He lives in the church.

We are going to go back to Exodus 19 again because something very interesting is given here. In Exodus 19, and at that point in Israel's history, there was not yet any tabernacle, temple, or altar. Or is there? Yes, there is.

You might recall from the movie *The Ten Commandments* how they portrayed Mount Sinai as being God's dwelling place. That is a true representation. I can remember the first time I saw that, I screwed up my face. I said, "That can't be right." Yes, it was.

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

Exodus 3:5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

Moses was standing on the dwelling place of God. It was God's territory.

Exodus 3:12 And he said, Certainly I will be with you; and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.

Now where does a priest serve? He serves where God lives. He serves at God's altar. Where was God living symbolically at that time? He was living at Mount Sinai. And where was God's altar? The whole mountain was God's altar. He not only had a dwelling place, He also had an altar. It was a mountain.

Exodus 18:5 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God.

So here we have another "setting apart." In this case it was an entire mountain to serve as God's dwelling place, and the altar at which the Israelites were to worship and to serve Him.

Let us notice the sequence of events in Exodus 19 as they unfolded. God is speaking to Moses, and telling him what he was to deliver to the people.

Exodus 19:9-13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And you shall set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that you go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever touches the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mount.

A line was drawn in the sand. "This far, and no farther."

In verse 10 the word "sanctify" there should be understood in the sense of devote, or dedicate, or consecrate. It meant that Moses was to focus their attention on what they were about to enter into. The clean clothing then is symbolic of the righteousness of the saints. That is a symbol of becoming holy, clean, in order to appear before God. Consecrated. Devoted. Not merely set apart, but with their mind focused, and therefore consecrated to God.

Exodus 19:16-18 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

It says in one of the psalms that we sing that Mount Sinai skipped to and fro like a lamb. I am sure it was terrifying to these sanctified, dedicated, consecrated people.

Exodus 19:19-25 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai for you charged us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. And the LORD said unto him, Away, get you down, and you shall come up, you, and Aaron with you: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD lest he break forth upon them. So Moses went down unto the people, and spoke unto them.

Now I am going to ask you a question. Did you catch the brief and simple description of the function of a priest in what we just read? It is in verse 22. Here it is. *A priest is someone set aside, set apart, to draw near to God.* That is what a priest does. That is the beginning of his responsibility, because in order for him to carry out the rest of that responsibility, he has to draw near to God.

It must be understood that the priest always acts in nearness—*near to, right in front of God*—because the priest works at the altar, and the altar is just outside of God's door. Is that not true? Is that not what the layout of the Tabernacle is? The priests had to draw near—beyond, closer to God—because they were allowed into the Holy Place where the altar of incense was and where the showbread was, and where the candelabra was. Correct? Correct.

Then on the Day of Atonement the high priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies—right into the very heart, the room where God Himself lived—once a year. Do you begin to get the picture? A priest is somebody who draws near to God. Are you doing it? Are you doing your job? That is your job.

Now what happened here? In a sense something very tragic happened, but God knew it was going to happen. It is clarified in Deuteronomy 5, and here we will end for today. Deuteronomy 5 is a repetition, only Moses clarifies.

Deuteronomy 5:22-31 These words the LORD spoke unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire) that you came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and you said, Behold, the LORD our God has showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God does talk with man, and he lives. Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have, and lived? Go you near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak you unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto you; and we will hear it, and do it. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when you spoke unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto you: they have well said all that they have spoken.

[And then He says:] O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. But as for you, stand you here by me, [really close, near] and I will speak unto you all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.

What happened here was that God gave the people a test to see whether they would draw near to Him. The test proved that Israel's fear of God was nothing more than a terror for their own lives. It was not a deep respect mingled with a trust, that despite this awesome display of power they were safer there than anywhere else they could have been. They did not believe that they had just been set apart, as Moses had been set apart, for safety.

God did not take Moses' life, did He? He would not have taken their lives either if they would have just followed through with what He told them to do: "This far and no farther." He would have considered this that they had drawn near to Him, as close as they could get. They did not keep His commandment. They were filled with self-concern and faithlessness, and they disqualified themselves. They rejected, they turned down the priesthood aspect of the Old Covenant. They never performed it. Even before the covenant was made, they turned it down. And God agreed with them. They were not fit to carry it out. That is why He gave the lament: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me."

"Do they think that I would have killed them if they had done what I asked them to do?" They were filled with self-concern, and they rejected what God revealed to them. What they made was a discovery of their unworthiness. They were not fit to draw near to Him, and so thus the yearning lament.

The other portions of the covenant remained in place. Even though Israel officially rejected the priesthood, they nonetheless still carried with them a consciousness that they were supposed to represent God before the world. To assist the people in this responsibility God officially, and shortly after that, appointed Moses as their mediator. He appointed the family of Levi to serve as functionaries about the Tabernacle, and specifically the family of Aaron to

draw near to Him as priests, and to serve under Moses, assisting him in teaching the Israelites how they were to perform the witnessing.

God willing, we will pick this up two weeks from today, and we will continue to detail the work of the priesthood and what we have been set apart to do, and eventually tie this into the Pentecost issue.