

Living Like You Belong to God

Lesson One: A God Who Separates Light from Darkness

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be Ye Holy: For I Am Holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Although some people prefer to believe that a loving God looks upon all His creatures as being the same, from the very beginning He has chosen to set certain things and people apart from others. We'll look at some of the clear distinctions God has set to mark specific people and things as holy.

Observe: As we begin our study, we need to go back to the Creation account in order to see who God is and what His desire was from the very beginning. Let's begin by looking at **Genesis 1:1-5** paying close attention to what God did.

Discuss:

- What did God do? We see that God did several things in these verses: He created the heavens and the earth; God said, “Let there be Light”; God saw that light was good; God separated the light from the darkness; and God called the light day and called the darkness night.
- God specifically separated the light from the darkness. God's first recorded words are “Let there be light.” His first act was to separate the physical light from the physical darkness. And spiritually speaking, He has been separating light and darkness ever since.
- Keep that in mind as we continue our study on holiness.

Observe: The people of Israel, God's chosen nation (**Genesis 12**), had been slaves in Egypt. God chose a man named Moses to lead them out and to serve as a mediator between them and Himself. The passage we're going to look at begins after God's chosen people had sinned greatly against Him. He forgave the sin but threatened to withdraw His presence from them. So, Moses was pleading with God. Read **Exodus 33:15-16**.

Discuss:

- Moses said that God's going with them—His presence distinguished Israel from all other nations. Moses wanted God's presence even more than the knowledge that the nation was forgiven.
- What about us, are we content just knowing our sins are forgiven, or do we want more than that from God?

Observe: As outlined in **Leviticus 21**, the priests were expected to preserve the holiness of the sanctuary and the uniqueness of the people of Israel. Therefore, they were subject to a higher standard than the average Israelite (read **Leviticus 21:6; Deuteronomy 33:10**).

Insight: The word *profane* here means “to defile, make common, dishonor, to violate a covenant.”

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Discuss:

- From the scriptures we just read, we learn that the priests were responsible for presenting the offerings by fire to the Lord as well as teaching the ordinances to Jacob and the Law to Israel. They were also the ones that put incense before the Lord and whole offerings on the Lord's altar.

Observe: We see in **Ezekiel 22:26** that Israel had not obeyed God's laws, and the priests were partly to blame.

Discuss:

- God speaking through Ezekiel brings the following charges against the priests.
 - They had done violence to God's law, profaned His holy things, they made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they had not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean.
 - They hid their eyes from the Sabbath (disobeyed the laws concerning it) and God was profaned among the people.

Observe: As we've seen, it was the duty of the priests to guard the holiness of the nation. By strict obedience to God's law, they showed themselves to be separate and made a clear distinction between holy and unholy. Let's look at **Leviticus 10:1-5**.

Insight: Nadab and Abihu had been privileged to stand on the holy mount with Moses and their father (**Exodus 24:9**). Having heard the words of the Law, they knew what God required.

Discuss:

- Nadab and Abihu were not doing what the Lord had commanded. In **Exodus 30:7-9**, as Moses was giving instructions from the Lord, Aaron was to burn fragrant incense upon the altar. **Verse 9** says, "Do not offer any unholy incense on the altar."
- In **Leviticus 10:1**, we see that Nadab and Abihu offered a strange (unauthorized) fire before the Lord. The problem was they were not doing things the way the Lord had prescribed. God was saying that He would be treated holy.
- God was not pleased with their worship, and He killed them.

Insight: Fire from heaven is used twelve times in the Old Testament—six times as a sign of God's approval and six times in judgement. In this context holy means to be set apart from the common and to be treated with great respect. The priests treated God as common and with great disrespect.

- God took Nadab and Abihu's disobedience seriously. God has not changed; He takes our disobedience seriously today as well.

- In verse 3, God commanded, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy and before all the people I will be honored.”
- Only by God’s grace and through the blood of Jesus can we walk in disobedience and be in God’s presence. But the disobedience breaks our fellowship and can hinder our prayers.

Observe: The Old Testament passages we’ve looked at so far make clear God’s concern with separating holy from profane in ancient times. But we need to know whether such distinctions still apply today. Let’s look at some New Testament passages to find out. Read **Romans 15:4**.

Discuss:

- By looking at the word written, we learn that what was written in earlier times is for our instruction now. The Scriptures were written that we might have hope through perseverance and encouragement through them.

Observe: What does all this talk about priests have to do with us? Turn to **1 Peter 2:5, 9**.

Insight: The word priesthood here carries the idea of a fraternity, a body of priests. It is referring to all believers.

Discuss:

- From these verses and insight, we learn that believers are now of the royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.
- According to **verse 5**, as priests believers are to 1) offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ and 2) proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Observe: Although Jesus’ death on the cross ended the need for blood sacrifices once and for all, Christians today are still expected to present sacrifices to God. Let’s look at how this ties in to the call to be different from the world around us. Let’s look at **Romans 12:1-2**.

Discuss:

- As a priest, each believer has the incredible privilege of coming into the presence of God, but with that privilege also comes responsibility. Believer-priests have the responsibilities of presenting themselves as living sacrifices. This includes the whole person of body and mind. Also, there are the responsibilities of not being conformed to the world, but being transformed by the renewing of one’s mind.
- If the believer does these things, they will prove what the good perfect and acceptable will of God is.

Observe: Let’s look at two more passages that highlight the responsibilities of believer-priests: **1 Peter 1:14-16 and Ephesians 5:6-10**.

Discuss:

- From these two passages of scriptures, we learn that believer-priests are not to be conformed to the world with its former lusts, be holy in all their behavior, and walk as children of the Light.
- From all we have seen, separation is a requirement or prerequisite for holiness. To be separate means being different from the world, called out for God, to be holy.
- The way we handle these truths about holiness and being separate, can help people see the difference Jesus has made in our lives and encourage them to seek after God.

Wrap It Up

The first recorded words of God in Scripture are “Let there be light” (**Genesis 1:3**). His second recorded act, after creating the heavens and the earth, was to separate light from darkness. This actual physical separation became a metaphor for a spiritual truth.

- In **John 1**, Jesus is described as the Light of the world shining into darkness.
- In **Matthew 5**, Jesus taught that, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, believers are the light of the world (**verse 14**). “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (**verse 16**).

Jesus then went on to describe holy living in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**).

Light is to be the characteristic of Christians. We are to be clearly separated from darkness. No gray, no shade, no shadows. We, as people who name the name of Christ, must be light—bright pure light, shining in the darkness so that everyone will see the truth, and some will even seek our Father.

Are we living as children of light? Is our holiness clearly visible to a dark world?

Sometimes, in too many places, the people called the church are living in the shadows. Let’s spend some time in prayer, asking God to show us areas of darkness in our lives, areas where we are not walking in holiness. If God shows us an area of darkness, confess it as sin, knowing that He has promised to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Then walk in light; live out the holiness that shows you belong to God.

Next Week’s Lesson: We Belong to a Holy God

Homework: Read **Exodus 3:2-6; Exodus 19:1-6; Revelation 15:4** and **1 Corinthians 3:16-17**.

“Let’s be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving our own selves.”
(**James 1:22**)

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