

Separate From the World

Introduction:

1. The Bible has many important ideas that are repeated throughout its story.
2. One of these themes or motifs is that the people of God are to be separate from the world.
3. Peter calls attention to the pervasiveness of the idea in Scripture when he puts together ideas from a variety of O.T. texts in 1 Pet. 2:9.
 - a. A chosen race – Isa. 43:20; Deut. 10:15.
 - b. A royal priesthood – Isa. 61:6; 66:21.
 - c. A holy nation – Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6.
 - d. A people for God's own possession – Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 14:2.
4. Observe that he connects Israel's separateness with the separateness of the people of God in his day. Thus he sees a continuity of separateness extending from ancient times to modern times.
5. Now you might observe that these passages say nothing about being separate from the world. Ah, but they do speak to idea of being joined to God and that necessarily means being separated from the world.
6. In this lesson we will work to trace this motif throughout the biblical record and try to learn something of the significance of it as it relates to us.

Discussion:

- I. There are evidences of this motif in the early chapters of Genesis.
 - A. Adam and Eve are in the Garden of Eden, there in the presence of God.
 - B. Sin results in their being barred from the Garden (Gen. 3:24).
 1. They are in the world.
 2. Sins impact is described.
 - a. Cain kills Abel.
 - b. "And he died" is the repeated phrase associated with men in Gen. 5.
 - c. Enoch seems to be the exception. Because he walked with God God took him (5:24).
 - d. But the deterioration of the world is evident in the corruption of mankind. Wickedness is widespread. Every intent of the thoughts of man was only evil continually. He would destroy them.
 - C. But there is an exception.
 1. God established a **covenant** with Noah.
 2. He would be brought safely through the flood.
 3. Separated apart, kept alive.
- II. This motif continues with the separation of Abram from his country, his relatives and from his father's house (Gen. 11:31-12:1-3).
 - A. Observe that Abram's fathers were idolaters (Josh. 24:2).
 - B. Terah died in Haran (Gen. 11:32).

- C. Abram and Lot separate (Gen. 13:14). Note that it is after this separation that God reiterates the promises to Abram. Note: the covenant of circumcision marks the separation from the world and joining to God (Gen. 17). Cf. to baptism in Col. 2:11-12.
- D. There is a separation between Abram and Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:12-14).
- E. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob are all chosen. The promises are reiterated to them. No other peoples receive these promises. No other peoples have the same relationship with

God

that these do. There are ethical and moral implications, although the chosen do not always follow the ethical and moral implications.

III. The motif continues, becoming even more pronounced with the nation of Israel.

- A. Ex. 6:7 makes their special relationship to God clear. "I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."
 - 1. Note first, the covenant language and identification as God's people.
 - 2. Second, note the separation from Egypt.
 - 3. Continually throughout the history of the nation of Israel they were reminded that God had brought them out of Egypt and that He was their God.
 - 4. Note that the crossing of the Red Sea was considered a transition point related to baptism in 1 Cor. 10:1ff.
- B. The tabernacle/temple represented this association with God and disassociation from the world.
 - 1. Ex. 29:43-45; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16.
 - 2. God was associated with the Most Holy Place. Various levels of proximity—holy place, court of women, court of Gentiles, etc.
 - 3. Levites performed the service. They were specially selected and purified. High priest only entered the Most Holy Place on one day per year after purifying himself by sacrifice.
- C. Before going over to take possession of the land of Canaan Moses warned of the necessity of not becoming involved with the peoples and maintaining their relation with God (Deut. 6:10ff; 7:1ff).
 - 1. Not based on their number, nor racial superiority, nor their righteousness (Deut. 7:7ff).
 - 2. Based on God's choosing them and making promises to them.
- D. They did not maintain this separation.
 - 1. Solomon was the case in point (1 Kings 11:1-13).
 - 2. Assyrian and Babylonian captivities resulted.
 - 3. God called them to come out of Babylon, i.e., to separate themselves from the world (Isa. 52:11; cf. 2 Cor. 6:17). Ezra and Nehemiah's reforms called for separation (Ezra 9; Neh. 13).
 - 4. God's good news involves a calling out of His people from the world (Isa. 52:1-7). Note: this identifies who the people of God are. They are the "ekklesia," literally those "called out."
We recognize this passage as quoted in Rom. 10:15 where Paul uses it in reference to the call of the gospel.

5. John the Baptist and Jesus had called people from the world too. The message of the kingdom was a message involving separation from the world and a joining together with God (Matt. 3:7ff). It is interesting to note that baptism was a transition point. There were ethical and moral implications of separation from the world and joining with God.
- F. The joining together with God reminds us of another biblical motif: marriage. God was married to His people in covenant relationship (Jer. 3; Ezek. 16; Hosea, etc.). This marriage implied separation from the world and being joined together with God. Association with the world was considered not only idolatry, but also adultery. Cf. James 4:1ff.

IV. Once you begin to pick up on this theme you will begin to see it throughout Scripture. Many additional passages might be cited. The N.T. text is emphatic on the separation theme. We do not have time in this lesson to identify all the references. In the time remaining, I would like to notice with you how this theme unfolds in the Book of Hebrews so that we can see the significance of what this means for us as the people of God.

- A. The people of God are separated from the world (Heb. 11:15-16; 13:14).
- B. While still living in the world our way is beset with hardship (Heb. 3:12-18; 5:11-6:12; 10:23-26; 12:4).
- C. But we pilgrims are journeying with a fixed purpose to the heavenly city (11:10, 16; 12:22-24; 13:14). In this place God will wipe away every tear. There will be no mourning, no crying, no pain, no death (Rev. 21:3-4).
- D. God said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5; cf. Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5). Note this was the promise made to Joshua and Israel immediately before they went over into the promised land. It is reiterated in Heb. 13:5 in light of the struggles of our journey and in anticipation of our entering His promised rest (Heb. 4:8-11).
- E. When we see ourselves as the special people of God, separated from the world and joined to Him, we can understand the pilgrimage we are on.
 1. We are enlightened on the meaning of the ethical and moral aspects of Christianity.
 2. We are prepared for the suffering and difficulties that lie ahead.
 3. We become clear on our mission of seeking and saving the lost.
 4. Our values are changed. What is important is now clearly defined. This life is all about the journey to the heavenly city, the final destination of the people of God.
 - a. There is great need for endurance (Heb. 10:32-12:3).
 - b. We want all to arrive safely (Heb. 12:12ff).
 - c. Since we have such a promise as this we praise God (Heb. 12:28) as we seek

the

city which is to come (Heb. 13:14).

Conclusion:

1. Are you separated from the world? And joined with God? See 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

2. Noah's transition point was the flood of water (1 Pet. 3:20). Israel's transition point was baptism in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:1ff). Both these passages suggest that our transition point is baptism.
3. Are you on the journey? "Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus . . ." (Heb. 12:1-2).
4. "Come out and be separate," says the Lord (Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17).