



## *Priests Who Teach the Difference*

*“Moreover, they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezekiel 44:23)*

*In Ezekiel 41-43 God provides the specifications for what will be the construction of the perfect Temple which all the former earthly iterations were only a veiled copy. All the previous ones were desecrated or misused in some way, but the final one will not give rise to those imperfections brought about by human frailty and failure to keep the whole of God’s Word concerning service to the One True God. In the latter half of Ezekiel 44 is described what will be the equally perfect service of the Levitical priests who serve directly in God’s very sanctuary before His very presence. But in addition there are some requirements pertaining to their responsibilities to the people as well. I cannot help but wonder that if every member of the New Testament church is now designated a priest (1 Pe. 2:5) why this might also be alluding to something **we** are supposed to do. I would argue in earnest that in fact this is something once common in the church which has all but disappeared today: teaching “the difference between the holy and the profane” and “the clean and unclean”.*

One of the advantages of no longer teaching how to distinguish between “the holy and the profane” or “the clean and the unclean” is

never having to justify why something biblically "*profane*" or "*unclean*" has been allowed to enter and take root in one's church. Such distinctions require putting something under the scrutiny of God's Word and closely examining the kind of spiritual fruit produced. This is why there is so often a strong connection between the dilution or even disappearance of the Bible from the pulpit and the rest of a church's activities embracing worldly approaches in place of biblical ones. If the Word is not taught, it is far less likely anyone will be equipped to contrast the "*profane*" or "*unclean*" practices which has been allowed entrance and even incorporation into what is called "church".

This most commonly comes up when something is challenged as being "worldly" and the response experienced is, "What is wrong with making church relevant to the modern day?" There is a lack of knowledge of the definition of the biblical standard much less how to apply it, replaced by the new standard of how well something emulates and stimulates as close as possible the implementation of its earthly counterpart. So the lyrics are no longer important, only that the sound is polished and professional; the message from the pulpit cannot make anyone uncomfortable and must always be "positive" and "uplifting"; it is not possible to hold anyone accountable for sin because that is considered unloving and judgmental, even though by biblical standards it is so judged in the most extreme terms. Since there is no difference designated within church proper "*between the holy and the profane*" or "*the clean and the unclean*", why are we surprised when so-called believers can and do not make any such distinction in the course of everyday life?

And so goes all the polls and research confirming that there is no longer a statistical difference between "church-goers" and "non-church-goers" for any moral or spiritual issue that can be named. The divorce rate and attitude about divorce? No difference. The stance on homosexuality, sex, and even adultery? No difference. Abortion, euthanasia, or almost any health-related issue? Statistically the same. The majority claiming the label "Christian" are incapable of making the

distinction between *"the holy and the profane"* as well as *"the clean and the unclean"* within the walls of the church, so why are we surprised they are equally incapable of effecting such differences when they leave for life outside in the real world?

But this leads to a situation in our church meetings which God takes to a whole other level. It begins by not being able to discern such differences but gives way to incorporating them in church activities to the point where things are not just "wrong", but have the devastating opposite effect of the intended goal of worship.

*"You shall say to the rebellious ones, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD, "Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel, when you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, even My house, when you offered My food, the fat and the blood; for they made My covenant void—this in addition to all your abominations. (Ezekiel 44:6-7)*

God calls it *"your abominations"*. When people can no longer tell the difference it is not long until they adopt things which by God's standards are unquestionably *"profane"* and/or *"unclean"*. First the standard is dropped of maintaining that everything must be biblically *"holy"* or *"clean"* and the doorway is therefore flung open to allowing entrance and permanent residence of things out-and-out *"profane"* or *"unclean"*. (This is really at the heart of the discussion when something is designated as being "Emergent", "Ecumenical", or "Purpose Driven".) And I cannot help but notice that in this particular instance God associates the problem not just with the abominations themselves, but through whom they were allowed entrance, people *"uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh"*. People who were not and are not His people in any way, shape, or form. This is what happens when we bring people in who are made members but are not actually saved.

I do not know the exact date or time it happened, but over the course of the past 30 or so years a complete reversal has occurred. Instead of church being a place of fellowship and discipleship, and the onus of reaching the unsaved remained upon each believer as they worked and lived in the everyday world, everything was redirected to bringing everyone to a single place for some kind of "one stop religious shop". Instead of taking the Gospel **out** to the unsaved where they lived, church has been turned inside out so that it is supposed to be something that lures everyone **in**. Once upon a time an unsaved visitor to your church would be immersed in what it means when Christians worship and fellowship together in the Word and might actually be convicted that there was something in their own life not measuring up to what they witnessed in this gathering; today they are more likely not to be threatened with nor see any difference at all. What kind of evangelism is that?

*"When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the porch of the gate and go out by the same way. But when the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, he who enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate. And he who enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. No one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered but shall go straight out. When they go in, the prince shall go in among them; and when they go out, he shall go out." (Ezekiel 46:8-10)*

In this description of God's vision for a perfect implementation of worship, no one leaves His presence to go back out into the world by the same way they initially entered. It is alluding to God's desire that His people do not come together simply as an insulation against the world, acting one way when in the world and another when gathered together in His presence, but are supposed to return not just changed but refusing to go back to the practices they came from. Biblical gatherings are supposed to be a source of strength for going out into the world and living according to God's Word and ways and to instill in the participants the desire **not** to return to the same condition they came from. They are supposed to return to the world **different**, not the same as when they started out.

["Priests Who Teach the Difference", Page 4 of 6](#)

This theme of not returning to the old life, of not going back the way you came, is repeated in Scripture such as when God commanded the prophet sent to the northern kingdom of Israel not to "*return by the way which you came*". (1 Ki. 13:9). The ultimate example is Egypt as the symbol of the old life to which no one should desire to return. Jesus repeatedly preached to those who came into personal contact with Him not to sin any more, to live a life changed from the heart and proven in the respective changes to one's behavior.

This is why some of us today are so passionate in our reactions to church growth approaches, especially when making such "seeker sensitive". It not only promotes activities completely opposite to the biblical standard, but give way to practices which are completely antithetical to God's Word and ways. Such proponents commonly assert that to merely say one believes in Christ without actually leaving the desires and ways of the old life to exclusively pursue His is enough. Since they no longer make the distinction within their church between the earthly and the biblical, why should they make those distinctions when it comes to what one does when they leave such weekly meetings to return to the world? If there is no difference at church, why should there be any difference anywhere else?

If you are one of the few remaining Bible-believing, Christ-consumed believers in this present age, you have probably struggled at one time or another with the question of why so many people claim the label "Christian" but the polls clearly show this cannot possibly be the case. If the majority of those raising their hands were truly putting their faith and God's Word into practice, most social problems would disappear overnight. There would be no "issue" over abortion, or access to pornography, or social injustice, or any number of moral dilemmas because that majority would be schooled in the difference between "*the holy and the profane*" and "*the clean and the unclean*" and demand such a standard be maintained in and out of the church.

I know that many Bible-believing Christians clearly see what is going on behind the major issues of our day in a general, prophetic sense, but for some reason do not grasp that the grass roots problem is not as much about the ignorance and evil we can always expect from the world, but that the church is no longer itself aware of the difference. We will never be able to successfully engage the world effectively until we face the fact that much of what is going on under the umbrella "church" is in fact biblically defined "abomination". The sooner that the church returns to adhering to the standard of differentiating between "*holy and profane*" and "*clean and unclean*", the sooner all those other issues will be materially impacted. I think we are going to have to become the priests who teach the difference.

In His Love,

[Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org](mailto:Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org)