

## LESSON 13: “IN,” BUT NOT “OF”

I have often heard people quibble about whether or not the church is a building or people. To be honest, the answer is both. It depends on how you are using the word. This argument lives in the world of what we call semantics, or, the study of meanings. If you are coming to this building, you are coming to the church. That is one way the word is used. But it is also true that we, as believers, constitute the church.

The Greek word translated church is ecclesia. In the first century, it was used of any group that was separated from or among the general population. A local ruling body was an ecclesia. The garden club was an ecclesia. An elite military unit, separated from the larger military, could technically be called an ecclesia. Because of this usage, the term was adopted for the church as a way to show that believers were separated from the rest of society. They/ we were and have been, “called out,” or separated from everyone else. This links to the OT teaching of being holy or “sanctified.”

Jesus clarified it this way.

## Jn 17: 13-19

<sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Note the phrases: “not of this world.” We see it I repeated several times. Also note the words, “sanctify” and “sanctified” in verses 17 and 19, respectively, as well as the word, “consecrate” in verse 18. These words and phrases are all linked in meaning and usage. The phrase “not of this world,” is something we see in the NT, whereas consecrate and sanctify are ideas that we see, beginning in the OT, and these ideas are related to sacred space.

Throughout the Bible, we can see the concept of God’s “otherness.” God has always been “set apart” or sanctified. And this is because of His holiness. God is the God of gods. He is the only uncreated being. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. God is all knowing, all powerful and all or ever present. But there was also the idea that wherever His presence dwelt on earth was special. The garden in Eden was special and set apart. Mt. Sinai, when God manifested there to Moses and Israel was set apart. This is why the Israelites, other than Moses, Aaron and a few others, were to not come too close to the mountain. This is what is referred to as “temple imagery,” – meaning that the separations we see in Exodus mirror the divisions

we see in the tabernacle and later the temple. God began to instruct the Israelites about this idea of sacred space, consecration, holiness and sanctification at Sinai. Embodied in these teachings is what the Bible calls, in Hebrew, **Herem** – meaning “devoted to destruction.”

We have several examples of this in the OT. First of all, we have the fact, geographically speaking, that Israel, not only as a people, but also as a land mass, was set apart for the glory of God. When God scattered the nations at Babel, he gave the nations over to the elohim, the “little g” gods. We have covered this before. On the heels of this, God calls Abram and then promises him that He will give the land of Canaan and make his family to number as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. It is important that we see how this covenant followed the dispersion at Babel. We can even see this in the NT, in the route Jesus took when going to Jerusalem. He by-passed Samaria, as it was seen to be unholy ground, dating back to the time of the divided kingdom in the OT. We can also see it when Jesus instructed the disciples to shake the dust off their feet when a household rejected the gospel. At that point, that home was deemed to be unholy ground. These ideas come from the concept of sacred space and holy ground.

- Naaman

If we go back to the tabernacle and later the temple, we can see that these were the place on earth that God’s presence dwelt. The tabernacle was always placed in the middle of the camp because God wanted to be in among and in the middle of His people. He wants to be in the center of our lives also. The tabernacle and the temple were consecrated, holy ground. The deeper you went into these structures,

the holier the ground was, until you eventually got into the holy of holies. Only the High Priest was allowed in there, and even then, he could only enter once a year. It was so holy that the priest entered upon fear of death. If he was not ceremonially pure enough, he could die. This brings us back to the concept of herem, or “devoted to destruction.”

Life happens. In our everyday lives, we come into contact with all sorts of things. This year, we have been concerned about covid. We encounter germs all the time. Think of herem in this way. Germs are contagious. In the Law, you have the holy place and then just outside of the temple, but in the camp of Israel, you have the profane. Profane is not a bad word. We tend to think of it this way, but it actually means “secular, neutral” and even “clean.” Things within the camp of Israel were good, but they weren’t “holy” or “as consecrated” as the area of the temple. You could live within the camp and remain there as long as remained clean. As we move away from the temple, through the camp, we find ourselves, “outside the camp” of Israel. This is where you had to go if you did something as touching a dead body, or had some sort of bodily emission, (blood, semen, etc.). None of these things were considered sin, in themselves. They were just a part of doing life. But, you had to be rendered “clean” in order to remain in the camp. This was done through ceremonial washings. But there is another place even farther from the temple. If we were to leave the temple, walk through the camp, go outside the borders of the camp, we would be “outside the camp.” But if continued walk away from the temple, we would eventually be, “in the wilderness.” This is where sin is to be sent. This is what was done, ceremonially speaking in the day of atonement. (explain)

Uncleanness was contagious and had to be kept away from ground and holy things. Touching or doing something unclean could then render one unclean and cleanness, or sanctification had to be restored through ceremonial washings.

The concept God was teaching them was that He is holy and anyone who wished to be in His presence had to be also. But this could only be done through ceremony.

Going back to Israel, they were God's chosen people, and were to be a nation of priests – meaning they were to be conduit of the nations to return to God. A priest is a mediator, one who interacts with others in order to show them the way to God. This was Israel's purpose. Israel's laws and culture showed them to be different from the surrounding nations. This is why people flocked to Jesus – He was different. But He was different in a good way. He wasn't different because He was weird. That would repel people. He was different because His love for people, His words and His justice were so different from anything the people, especially the outcasts of society, had ever heard or experienced. And that is what is to separate us also. If we are truly mirroring God's heart and being His imagers, we will also be different. Not in a goofy way, but in a good, holy and just way.

The idea of sacred space flows freely into the NT. We can see Paul working with this idea when he dealt with church discipline. According to Paul, each body of believers was holy ground. Paul believed in the sanctity of the church. I believe we have lost some of that in our modern, more casual society. But in Paul's mind, the church was no place for unrepentant sin.

The church at Corinth was a rough place to pastor. Corinth was what we would refer to as the “sin city” of the day. It was a mostly Gentile city, thoroughly pagan and secular. It was wealthy and full of temples where prostitution was rampant. Paul planted a church there and it began to grow. But what we see is that as people came into the church, they brought their baggage. If you read the first letter to the Corinthians, you will see that Paul is dealing with all sorts of drama there. Salvation is instant, but the sanctification, (there is that word again) of people, i.e., our spiritual growth is a lifelong journey.

Among all the other drama, there was a man in the church who was having an affair with his father’s wife – his stepmother. We can glean from Paul’s letter that this man had been confronted about the situation and told that it had to stop. It was sinful. But the man would not stop the affair.

### 1 Cor. 5: 1 – 12

It is actually reported that there is **sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife.** <sup>2</sup> And **you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.**

**1Cor. 5:3** For though **absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.** <sup>4</sup> When you are assembled **in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,** <sup>5</sup> you are **to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.** <sup>6</sup> **Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** <sup>7</sup> **Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really**

are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Let us therefore celebrate the festival, <sup>9</sup>not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

**1Cor. 5:9** I wrote to you in my letter <sup>10</sup>not to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>11</sup>not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, <sup>12</sup>since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>13</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone <sup>14</sup>who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. <sup>15</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? <sup>16</sup>Is it not those inside the church<sup>2</sup> whom you are to judge? <sup>17</sup> God judges<sup>3</sup> those outside. <sup>18</sup>“Purge the evil person from among you.”

This probably seems mean and intolerant to some. But look at what Paul said. The people were boasting about this situation. **Why are they boasting about such a thing? They were boasting of their tolerance – thinking it be equated with love and grace.**

Don't get me wrong. Love is patient and kind. Look at what Paul says later in the same letter.

### **1 Cor. 13: 4 - 7**

<sup>1</sup>Love is patient and <sup>2</sup>kind; love <sup>3</sup>does not envy or boast; it <sup>4</sup>is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It <sup>6</sup>does not insist on its own way; it <sup>7</sup>is not irritable or resentful;<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup>it <sup>10</sup>does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but <sup>11</sup>rejoices with the

truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

If we study Paul's whole letter, we see the balance in this. Love is patient and it isn't arrogant, but arrogance is what Paul accuses the church of being when they failed to deal with this heinous unrepentant sin and sinner. How were they arrogant? They were arrogant in their refusal to see sin and the sanctity of the church as God saw it. They refused to see themselves and their gathering as sacred space. They had brought sin into the camp.

Let me clarify. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God. We know that. But in the case of the man having an affair with his stepmother, the man refused to cease and repent. And he also refused to leave the church. Look at this story from the OT.

**Josh. 6: 15 - 18**

On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. <sup>16</sup> And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city. <sup>17</sup> And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction.<sup>2</sup> Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. <sup>18</sup> But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.



- Explain Achan
- Note the phrase, “devoted to destruction” Heb. - herem

### Josh. 7: 10 - 13

The LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? <sup>11</sup> Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. <sup>12</sup> Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. <sup>13</sup> Get up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, “There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you.”’

Israel had defeated Jericho, but then went on to lose the battle at Ai. Ai was barely considered a village, with no defenses, and Israel lost because they were unclean, due to the sin of Achan.

Achan’s sin, his rebellion, led to the unclean thing being allowed in the camp of Israel. Holy ground had been tainted by a contagious germ. Achan had brought radioactive material into the camp and though he wouldn’t be irradiated by it. He was wrong.

Going back to the church at Corinth, this man had done the same thing. He lived in open sin, in direct rebellion to God and brought it into the church, the building and the people, thinking it didn’t

matter. The people then boasted at their tolerance of such a thing. But that just won't do.

Once again, we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. But this man refused to repent. He saw nothing wrong with what he was doing and then dared anyone to say differently. Paul then steps in to fix the matter. What was his solution?

v. 2a

“Let him who has done this be removed from among you.”

v. 5b

<sup>5</sup> you are *to* deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so *that* his spirit may be saved *in* the day of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

**v.13**

God judges<sup>3</sup> those outside. *“Purge the evil person from among you.”*

Paul cannot be more serious. This unrepentant man must be placed without the camp! Why was he to be removed from the church? Because that is where is supposed to be. The parallel is that of Azazel and the Day of Atonement.

Look at Paul's words and reasoning.

**1Cor. 5:9** I wrote to you in my letter *not* to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>10</sup> *not* at all meaning *the* sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, *since* then you

would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? <sup>13</sup> God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

Paul makes a distinction between those outside the church, those “in the world” and those within the church. This goes back to what we talked about at the very beginning – the meaning of the church. It goes back to how Jesus referred to His followers. Look at the contrast Jesus makes elsewhere.

Speaking to the Pharisees who refuse to believe in Him:

### **John 8: 23 - 24**

He said to them, **“You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”**

The Pharisees were deemed as, “of this world.” That is a key facet of the unbeliever. Jesus is on the opposite end of the spectrum. But so are we! Look at what Jesus says elsewhere.

**1 John 4:**

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Jesus says we, due to our faith in Him, are not of this world. Therefore, we are set apart, sanctified and holy. And when we read of how Paul says we, both as individuals and a corporate body, are the temple of God, we should understand, when putting that together with what we have seen from the OT and the idea of sacred space and “herem” what is being said and how important it is. This is life-changing stuff.

### Why it matters

As believers, as the temple of God, housing His Holy Spirit, we ARE holy ground! Do we live as though we are? If each of us is a temple, then we ARE sacred space and that means that we cannot bring unholy into the holy. Do we do that? Of course, at times we all do this. But the question then becomes, “Will we rebel, or will we repent?” Will we be like Achan and the guy at the church in Corinth, rebelling against God, willfully and actively thumbing our noses at God? That is altogether different

from the person who strives to do the right thing. Paul had the same issue – and if we are honest, we do also.

## **Rom. 7:15**

<sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

**We are sacred space. We are “in the world,” but not “of the world.”**

The love God has for us should move us to live in this manner. Being of this world is to be absorbed by the world’s concerns and living accordingly. Unbelievers should be able to tell from our speech, behavior, ethics and attitude toward others that we’re not cynical, selfish, or harsh – that our focus is not on getting ahead or using people. We should not live to gratify ourselves. We should be the antithesis of these things, as was Jesus. People wanted to be around Him and like Him because He wasn’t like everyone else and He wasn’t like the system into which He was born.

What we do in our lives AND in our churches should elevate God and Jesus. In biblical times, a visit to the temple reinforced ideas about God’s perfection, holiness and justice! Is that what happens when we attend church and worship today?

One of the patterns that has shown up time and again as we’ve gone through this series is that God continually works through mankind and mankind constantly fails. Yet God continually chooses to work through us. Why? He does because He loves us. But we can’t take that

love, His grace for granted. We can't cheapen it as the man in the Corinthian church did. God is holy!

**Lev. 11:44** For I am the LORD your **God**. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy**, for I am **holy**.

I hope we can see how the OT ties into the NT, and how these concepts are applicable to us today. God hasn't changed. He is still holy and because His Spirit resides in every believer, we should be also. Go out this week in the knowledge that you ARE holy ground – not because of our works, but because God is holy and has chosen to live in our hearts.