

MARCH 25-APRIL 1: HOLY WEEK

INTRODUCTION BY DR. GIL STAFFORD

“Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Peter 1:15-16). “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. . . . be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2). “Perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:17-18).

Three dimensions of sanctification include (1) a setting apart to God, belonging to God; (2) a cleansing, so God can use what belongs to him; and (3) accomplishing God’s mission. Sanctification is vocational and missional. The goal of holiness is that everything about your church life and your personal life will fulfill God’s purposes.⁴

Salvation is the gift of a new identity, which “is the result of God’s initial, foundational sanctification. The word, sanctification, *hagiasmos*, signifies the process of being made holy. . . . All, regardless of their degree of maturity or immaturity, are referred to as the ‘sanctified in Christ Jesus.’ It is on the basis of this new status, then, that Paul addresses [the Corinthians’] shortcomings. Even though their problems are much like those of the population in general, he speaks not to Corinthians in general but to the community of Christian faith at Corinth. Why them in particular? Because they have been ‘sanctified in Christ Jesus.’ On the basis of the indicative of who they are by the grace of God, he proceeds to address them with the imperatives of the gospel.”⁵

The gospel, of course, revolves around Jesus, whose “ministry was that of teacher, preacher, exorcist, and healer. He taught a way of life, preached the good news of the Kingdom, cast out demons, and healed the sick and diseased.

“While the descriptive statements quoted above are important summaries of our Lord’s ministry while he walked this earth, they do not tell the whole story. The summit of the Gospels is his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and session (where he sits, intercedes, and reigns) ‘at the right hand of Power’ (Matt. 26:64), without which we would know nothing about the Palestinian ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. It was this final drama during the incarnation that catapulted Jesus’s Palestinian disciples into becoming the first fruits of the universal church of Christ. This decisive, historical,

⁴The first two paragraphs of this introduction (and the biblical quotation at the very end) are gleaned from Dr. Stafford’s class notes from “Constructive Theology III: Church and the Holy Life,” at the Anderson University School of Theology, as recorded by David Aukerman on August 30, 2005.

⁵Theology for Disciples (Anderson: Warner Press, 1996), pp. 346-7.

multidimensional occurrence (i.e., crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and session) precipitated the church's later confessions about the universal significance of the person and work of Jesus."⁶

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter [finisher] of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

CONTRIBUTORS FOR THIS THEME

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⁶ Theology for Disciples, p. 104.