

What do we mean by “distinct”?

- Oxford dictionary - “recognizably different in nature from something else of a similar type.”
- God uses a word to describe what HE means by being different from those around them: Holy.
 - Consecrated, set apart, sacred

Class Outline:

1. God calls his people to be holy.
2. *How* does God call his people to be holy?
3. What does this mean for us?

1. God calls his people to be holy.

In the beginning:

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Genesis 1:26

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” Genesis 1:31

Throughout the OT:

“You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” Leviticus 20:26

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” Deuteronomy 14:2

"The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways."
Deuteronomy 28:9

"And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord;"
Isaiah 62:12a

"But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;" Psalm 4:3a

Throughout the New Testament:

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."
John 15:18-19

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:13-16

2. How has God called his people to be distinct/holy?

By obeying Him.

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Exodus 19:5-6

God gives his people commands in the scriptures.

- 2 kinds: Prohibition and Prescription.
 - Prohibition - Don't do this
 - Don't worship other gods

- Don't commit adultery
 - Don't forsake the gathering
- Prescription - Do this
 - Do worship me only
 - Do love others more than yourself
 - Do make disciples of all nations
- Faithfully obeying God's commands naturally cause his people to be distinct and holy.
 - This is always objectively true – but depending upon the issue it can be more (or less) noticeable to the surrounding world.

But do God's people actually obey him?

- The short answer is no. Does Israel obey God sometimes? Yes. But then what do they do? Go right back to their sin.
- The same is true for God's people today. Do we obey God? Sometimes, yes. But then we go right back to our sin.
- So if the way that we are distinct, holy, set apart is to obey God – but we don't actually obey God – then what? We're not actually distinct. So what's the solution?
 - Jesus
- So for God's people to actually be set apart, to actually be holy, to actually be distinct from the world, is to put their hope and trust in the one who is actually holy, the one who is actually set apart and distinct. And WHY is he actually set apart and distinct? Because he obeys God perfectly.

So let's answer the question posed at the beginning of this section: How has God called his people to be distinct/holy? By obeying Him → We don't → But Jesus does.

3. What does this mean for us?

If our goal is to be distinct, then we have a short-sighted goal. Our goal should be faithfulness, and the result will be that we are distinct.

Being distinct/holy is not merely marked by what we refuse to do, what we avoid, or what we hate. It is marked by those things, but it cannot be only those things. And over the last several generations, that's what Christians – particularly here in the southern part of the US – have been marked by. But what should we be marked by?

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

How do Christians tend to think of this issue? "In the world but not of it"

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

John 15:18-19

"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. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." John 17:14-19

We cannot flee the world. We have been sent into it. But that's not to say that we shouldn't be discerning.

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16

Perhaps "in the world but not of it" should be replaced with "Not of the world, but sent into it."

So if we've been potentially thinking about this wrong, what does it look like to think about it right?

- It is a work of the Spirit.
 - In order for us to be actually distinct, we must be indwelt by the Spirit, who gives us a new heart that is capable of bearing the fruit of faithfulness and thereby desiring to obey God's word, which will lead to actually being distinct. This reality should permeate every facet of our lives:
 - How we spend our time

- How we spend our money
- How we use our gifts/abilities

God's design and desire is that we would have a changed heart, a new heart of flesh that replaces our heart of stone that now produces these changed behaviors that make us distinct/holy.

So let's recap our lesson:

- God uses the word holy to describe his people as set apart and distinct from the world.
- Holiness is achieved through faithfulness and obedience to God.
- God's people are not successfully faithful and obedient, but Jesus is.
- Holiness is achieved by Christ for us, and as we walk in faithfulness and obedience to Him we grow to look more like the Holy One.
- The distinction from the world for the Christian therefore is afforded to them through salvation in Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit.