

December 25, 2011 AM
#1441

Series: Who Is God?
Jehovah-Qadash
The LORD Who Sanctifies

I'll never forget my first Christmas. I don't mean my first Christmas ever. I don't even remember that one. But I'll never forget my first real Christmas.

I grew up in a home that was pretty irreligious. Our celebrations were the tree, the lights, the presents, and that's it. I had a vague knowledge that Christmas was a celebration of Jesus' birthday but that's all it was, a vague knowledge. Jesus was kind of back behind the scenes somewhere but He certainly didn't have anything to do with my life.

When I was 17 years old I had a friend die in a car accident. I think that shook me up more than anything I'd ever experienced before. Sandy and I had been dating and she'd been talking to me about my need to trust Christ as my personal savior.

Doug's death in that accident stripped away all my excuses and one night, as we sat on the floor in Sandy's living room I bowed my head and asked Christ to be my savior.

I received Christ, but I really don't think I even begin to understand the depth of my sin or the even greater depth of God's forgiveness. I didn't do the things that are necessary to grow in the faith like read the Bible and spend time with God in prayer and so I was easily swayed.

I went to college, started smoking weed, ended up dropping out of school traveling around the country, consuming enormous quantities of whatever drugs I could get my hands on in some frantic search for peace and fulfillment.

The really crazy part of the story was, I knew in my heart that I was put on the planet to serve God but I fought against that truth with everything I had in me. I wanted to run my life my way, not God's way.

In the early 80's there was a Broadway musical titled "Your Arms Are Too Short To Box With God." That summed up my life.

Finally after 4 years of fighting against God, God threw the knockout punch and I went down for the count. God in His grace changed me from a runner and a fighter to a willing servant who wanted to live my life for Him.

A few weeks later I asked Sandy to marry me and 3 months later we were married. If you can believe it, they asked us to be the youth directors at the church we were attending.

I'd been off of drugs for 6 months, I hadn't even read through the Bible yet and there we were working with the teens. That first year, when Christmas rolled around it was unlike any Christmas I had ever celebrated before.

When I say, I'll never forget my first Christmas, that's the one I'm talking about. That was my first real Christmas. That was my first Christmas that was totally centered of God's indescribable gift to us of His Son.

Christmas is about God fulfilling the ancient promises and coming into our world to be our savior.

2000 years ago Joseph was in a quandary. His bride to be was pregnant and he knew the baby wasn't his. But the Bible tells us,

But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21)

The name Jesus is actually the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Yehowshuwa*. We translate it "Joshua" in the Old Testament. *Yehowshuwa* is actually a compound word. It's made up of Jehovah, the name of God, and the verb *yasha* which means "to save." Joseph and Mary didn't have to go through this whole, "what do we name our child" deal that so many parents wrestle with. Joseph was given a divine command to name his Son "Jehovah saves" because He would save His people from their sins.

This is the last week of our series "Who Is God?" For the past 5 weeks we've looked at Hebrew compound names of God that included Jehovah to learn what the Bible says about the nature and character of God.

There's no end to people's opinions about God. All you have to do is a survey of the world's religions and you'll end up being overwhelmed with different ideas.

The people who say, “We all worship the same God apparently haven’t taken a hard look at what various faiths actually believe.” There’s opinion after opinion about God’s character. But there’s one thing that distinguishes biblical Christianity from all other faiths.

Other religions make us the ultimate Savior. All religions make the way to God a system of good works and religious actions. That appeals to us because we’re works oriented people. Everything in life we earn so it only follows that the way to God can be earned.

There’s 3 problems with that view. One, it makes us the savior so we get the distinction. We get the recognition. We get the pat on the back and God takes second place.

Two it makes the sufferings on the cross more than unnecessary. It makes them a horrible travesty that never needed to take place. Christ’s sufferings were a waste if there’s another way to God.

And three, it contradicts the clear teaching of the Bible. Jesus is the Savior. If we could be our own savior we wouldn’t need someone to rescue us. The Bible says, “*You are My witnesses,*” says the LORD, “*And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.* (Isaiah 43:10-11)

It’s not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)

See why it’s so important to allow the Bible to speak for itself?

Now so far we’ve looked at *The LORD Our Righteousness, The LORD Our Peace, God With Us, The LORD Our Banner, and The LORD Our Shepherd.*

Today on Christmas day we’re going to delve into Jehovah-Qadash *The LORD Who Sanctifies.*

Listen to these passages:

Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. (Exodus 31:13)

And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you. (Leviticus 20:8)

You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you. (Leviticus 22:32)

Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. (Exodus 20:12)

I. Sanctification Means “To Be Set Apart For God”

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The Hebrew word for “sanctify” is *qadash* and it’s defined as “consecrate, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, and be separate.”

God was clear about His purposes for His people. He wanted them to be different than the pagan nations around them. That’s one of the reasons why He gave the commandments.

Open Bible to Leviticus 20 page 116

God led His people out of slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness and to the foot of Mount Sinai. That’s where God gave Moses the 10 commandments written on tablets of stone.

As the people remained camped at Sinai God continues to communicate. In fact, no other book in the Bible records so many direct words of God. There’s 83 references to God speaking in Leviticus. The book is quoted more than 40 times in the New Testament.

Read verses 1-2

Molech was an ancient fire deity worshipped by the Canaanites generally, and Phoenicians in particular. Molech was the national deity of the country of Ammon, east of the Jordan, or the Ammonites..

The cult idol of Molech was made of brass, hollow, and with hands held out, palms up. The idol was heated until the hands turned red hot then the Canaanites would sacrifice their first born child by placing it in the idol's hands.

As absolutely barbaric and unthinkable as that was, God had to warn His people not to follow the practices of the surrounding nations, even the burning of their own children.

Read verses 3-6

So here's the command in verse 7 and the reason in verse 8

God says, "I'm Jehovah. I'm not Molech or Chemosh, or Baal, or any other mythological god. I'm the true and living God. Consecrate yourselves. Keep my commandments because I'm Jehovah Qadash, the Lord who sanctifies you.

By virtue of the fact that you belong to Me you're set apart from all other people. You're different.

Notices what God says in chapter 22

He gives Israel more laws to set them apart. We think the world is rough in our day. The Jewish people were surrounded by cultures that sacrificed their children, committed incest and bestiality, and practiced the most vile sexual perversions in the name of worship. No wonder God gave such stern warnings to be separate.

Read verses 31-33

I am the Lord who sets you apart. You shall not profane my holy name through sin.

The problem was the Israelites were just like us in one important way. They had a sin nature. Since Adam we're all born with a sin nature. That's why the angel told Joseph that Mary's virgin born child would save His people from their sins.

And just like God set His people Israel apart for Himself He wants the same for us. We may not be under all 613 commandments that the Jews were under but the Bible is clear about God's call in our lives to holiness.

We live in a world that's filled with temptations to do things our way instead of God's way. He wants us to be set apart from all that.

Listen to some of these New Testament verses on sanctification:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality. (I Thessalonians 4:3)

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Thessalonians 5:23)

Therefore if anyone cleanses himself... he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. (II Timothy 2:21)

I. Sanctification Means “To Be Set Apart For God”

II. Sanctification Isn’t Something We Produce In Ourselves

Four times in the Old Testament God says the phrase, *I am the LORD who sanctifies you*. Here’s where the heart of the Christmas message comes in.

Jesus Christ was born into the world to set us apart for Himself.

Turn to John 17 page 1062

John 17 takes place on the last night of Jesus’ earthly life. He’s already celebrated the Passover meal, or what we call the last supper. The next thing that happens is He takes Peter James and John into the Garden of Gethsemane to watch with Him in prayer.

He’s just spent John 13 through 16 trying to prepare His disciples for the fact that He’ll be leaving and they get to take over the job of spreading the good news of salvation.

In John 17 we have the prayer of Jesus for His disciples. Some people have called this the true Lord’s prayer.

Read verses 1-5

So the Son is glorifying the Father. He’s been faithful and will remain faithful to the end. The disciples have eternal life because of Jesus.

Read verse 9

There’s no doubt who is the focus of Jesus’ prayer. It’s the 11 faithful disciples who are about to get thrust into a whirlwind of confusion when Jesus is arrested.

But now notice verse 20

This prayer goes way beyond His immediate disciples. This is for believers down through the ages. This is for you. This is for me.

Now jump back to verse 17

Sanctify them through Your word. Here's how Jehovah-Qadash sets us apart. It's through the Bible. It's through the truth of Scripture.

What do we find when we read the Bible? The whole reason we need to be set apart by God and His truth is because we're lost. We're separated from God.

The Bible says, The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.
(Luke 19:10)

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way. (Isaiah 53:6)

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? (Luke 9:25)

In fact the Bible goes even further and says we're born into the world spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

You might say, "Wait a minute Ed, I'm not perfect but I'm just as good as the next guy."

That's absolutely true. You and I aren't perfect. All we have to do is look around and we can always find someone whose worse on the sin scale than we are.

But here's what the Bible says, *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.* (Galatians 2:10) It's not about being better or worse than the next guy. It's about being a law breaker.

Who in this room has loved God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all of their mind 24/7 /365? Who's never broken that commandment? Jesus said that was the greatest of all the commandments. Who hasn't even broken the one He called the second greatest, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself?*

We tend to give ourselves a whole lot more credit than we deserve.

The Bible says, *There is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.* (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

The truth that sanctifies us starts with the ugly reality that we're sinners before the holy and righteous God of the universe.

If we weren't sinners Christmas would have never happened. If we weren't sinners then there'd be no need for a virgin birth or a bloody cross.

It's God who sets us apart and makes us His own.

God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (II Timothy 19-10)

I. Sanctification Means "To Be Set Apart For God"

II. Sanctification Isn't Something We Produce In Ourselves

III. Sanctification Is The Heart Of The Christmas Message

This past week I spoke with someone who just found out they have cancer and have been given less than a year to live. It broke my heart because it's someone I care about very much and we've talked about Jesus Christ and faith before.

But when I found this out the urgency level just got ratcheted up to Defcon 1. So I tried once more to point to the amazingly exclusive statements of Jesus like:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6) or

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me has everlasting life. (John 6:47)

And this is what they said. "If God is love then He lets every person find their own way to Him."

The Bible says this about the God of love, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16)

Turn to Luke 2 page 1005

Read verses 8-12

Here's how God loved the world. He entered our world through the incarnation. He came as Immanuel, God with us. He is the Lord but He humbled Himself to take on humanity to become the Savior.

People who can find their own way don't need a savior. If you're on the operating table and your heart stops there's nothing your going to do to get it going again. But when the doctor picks up those paddles, yells, "Clear," and hits your chest and your heart goes back into rhythm, that doctor acted as your savior. That doctor did what you couldn't do for yourself. They brought you from death to life.

There's born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Christmas is about the ultimate setting apart. The Bible says,

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (I John 4:10)

Propitiation is a theological word that means "satisfaction." There's only one thing that could satisfy the justice of a holy God. That's a perfect sacrifice. We couldn't provide it ourselves because we're all far from perfect. The Lord Himself became the sacrifice.

What is Christmas all about? It's so much more than Mary and Joseph, a donkey, a baby born in a stable and laid in a manger. It's all of that and so much more. It's about a baby that would grow to be a man, live a perfect life, and then die on a cross in our place and rise again.

Josh Buice writes, The purpose of Christmas was about salvation. It was a saving mission. Christmas was a redemptive mission. Christmas was a Devil crushing, sin atoning, grave defeating, God propitiating, sinner saving mission. That is why angels were filled with joyful song. That is why Jesus came – to save us from our sin!

The Bible talks about sanctification on three levels.

First there is positional Sanctification. A believer is set apart in Christ by faith. *By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10).*

Positional sanctification means that because of the finished work of Christ we stand perfect before God. It's the only way a holy God could accept us.

Secondly there is progressive Sanctification. That's God calling us to be experientially set apart more and more to walk in holiness.

Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. (Romans 6:19).

Finally, we get the ultimate Christmas gift. We'll leave these bodies with our sin natures and weakness of the flesh and stand before our Savior face to face. The Bible says we'll be like Him when we see Him as He is.

Every step of sanctification depends on God's grace. Every step in sanctification is rooted in the Christmas story. Every step in sanctification is God's work in us.

Maybe you're like I was for so many years. Maybe until today your celebrations have been the tree, the lights, the presents, and that's it. Maybe you've had a vague knowledge that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus' birthday but that's all it's been, a vague knowledge. Maybe Jesus was kind of back behind the scenes somewhere but He certainly didn't have anything to do with your life.

This morning that can all change. Jehovah-Qadash wants to give you life. Will you believe this morning? Will you make this Christmas your first real Christmas?