

GOD'S SUPER-NATURAL PLAN FOR YOUR CITY September 17, 2002

Sanctify, Sanctified – in Old Testament (Hebrew) – to set apart as holy. Primarily used relating to persons or objects set apart for use by God and by this dedication, completely set apart from common uses. In the New Testament – Hagiazō (Greek) – to make holy or to sanctify and Hagiasmos – sanctification or holiness. Thus sanctification and holiness are related (sometimes identical and should be studied in connection with each other.

In the New Testament holiness is a dynamic process. The holy is actually the common, infused now by the Holy Spirit and transformed for His service. Thus our sanctification has to do with God's transformation of us into persons whose actions in daily life are expressions of the Lord.

Some examples of Sanctify in the New Testament:

1. John 17:17, 19

Sanctify them (Purify, consecrate, separate them for yourself, make them holy) by the Truth. Your Word is Truth.

And so for their sake and on behalf I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified (dedicated, made holy, consecrated) in the Truth.

The sanctifying agent here is God's Word. The goal of sanctification is that believers will be prepared to be sent into the World as Jesus was sent, to glorify God by doing his work.

2. Acts 26:12, 18 - choosing you out (selecting you for Myself) and delivering you from among this (Jewish) people and the Gentiles to whom I am sending you.

To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so they may thus receive forgiveness and release from their sins and a place and portion among those who are consecrated and purified (sanctified) by faith in Me.

Sanctification here is spoken of as being part of each believer's experience, an essential part of the past aspect of salvation.

3. Rom. 15:16 - In making me a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. I act in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, in order that the sacrificial offering of the Gentiles maybe acceptable (to God), consecrated (sanctified) and made holy by the Holy Spirit. Here the Holy Spirit is the agent of sanctification (i.e. Salvation).

4. I Thess. 5:23. And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through (that is, separate you from profane things, make you pure and wholly consecrated to God) and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound and complete and found blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ the Messiah.

God is again the agent of sanctification. We also see that the idea of sanctification is presented as a present and future possibility for believers as God continues to perfect their lives.

From these passages we see that God sanctifies believers and the blood of Jesus is the basis for this. Divine sanctification is effected by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God is an active agent in the process.

We know sanctification takes on various meanings. It can stand for the accomplished work of God applied to an individual in salvation. But it can also refer to the working of the Word and the Spirit to equip us to serve God in the world and to be morally blameless. (Zondervan).

B. Incense – was burned as something especially pleasant. In both Old and New Testament it is used to symbolize prayer. Psalm 14:12 – Let My prayer be set forth as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Luke 1:10 - And all the throng of people were praying outside (in the court) at the hour of incense (burning).

Incense was used in several ways in worship of the Lord.

1. The priests prepared a special mixture of incense to be used only in worship.
2. It was added to some of the offerings burned in sacrifice.
3. In the New Testament incense was used to indicate that which is especially pleasing to God, a special gift added to basic commitment. (Phil. 4:14-19)
4. The knowledge of Jesus spread by evangelists is viewed as the rich fragrance of incense permeating the world. (2 Cor. 2:14-17)
5. The prayers of the saints are symbolized as rising clouds of incense drifting up to Heaven. (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4)

C. Porch – The passage beneath the house-front from the street to the court inside - open to the sky. This passage was closed next to the street by a large folding gate with a small wicket for single persons. (John 18:16, 17) (Matt. 26:71) I have been compelled to write this because of what I see for the churches and the city. This is intended to encourage the priests, pastors and other church leaders.

I believe God has chosen this city as His city. A city where He is invited to dwell, a city whose people want to worship Him, a city that will receive His instructions, a people that will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. He is looking to this city to repent of their evil and be willing to come up to a new level in their relationship and obedience to Him. He is looking for leaders, priests, pastors, etc. willing to spend much time with Him to hear His Heart then be bold enough to follow His directions. He desires worship from His people as never before, worship that comes ahead of our schedules, our busyness, our agendas. When we are able to rise to these new levels, and there are many, God has an abundance of good things He has been wanting to give us for a long time, that He will begin pouring out on us. It boggles one's mind to try to know all that God has for us. It is awesome.

There are many thousands of people in this city searching for this new relationship, searching for the connection to this wonderful God. People are searching for Truth, peace, joy and a personal relationship to Him. They have been looking to Church leaders.

Can we, as God's leaders in the church, be counted on? Are we as church leaders willing to blow the lid off apathy, sin, religion, and the status quo and lead our people up to this new level where our loving father wants us? If we fail to answer God's call on us in this city, He will go looking elsewhere for a people willing to answer His call. Let me share some ideas with you from the book of 2 Chronicles. This will probably only be a reminder for some but there may be something here that will challenge you.

First of all let's look at just the kings, beginning with:

1. Chapter 12 – Rehoboam became king and forsook the law of the Lord (V 1). In verse 14 "he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord with all His desire".
2. Chapter 14:2 - King Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.

3. Chapter 17:3 – "the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the ways of his father", who was Asa, a godly king.
4. Chapter 21:6 – Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab (the most wicked of all kings) for he married the daughter of Ahab and did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord".
5. Chapter 22:4 – Ahaziah "did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab, for they were his counsellors, after his father's death, to his destruction". I only list some kings to illustrate the point that when a city or country is ruled by a godly leader, the people prosper and are happy as with king Asa. But the opposite is true of an ungodly leader.

In Chapter 29 we find Hezekiah, grandson of Zechariah became king. Verse 2 "he did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father (forefather) had done. The king prior to him, "Ahaz, had taken utensils from the house of God, shut up the doors of the temple (the holy place and the holy of holies) and made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem". (Ch. 28:24)

So when Hezekiah became king, "he said to them, Levites, hear me! Now sanctify (purify and make free from sin) yourselves and the house of the Lord the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the holy place" (Chapter 29:5). The Levites were instructed to:

1. Sanctify themselves (note page 1)
2. Free God's house (people) from sin
3. Carry the filth out of the holy place

The reason for this was six-fold:

1. They had forsaken God (v. 6)
2. They turned their backs on Him (v. 6)
3. The doors of the porch were closed (v. 7) – see page 34. The lamps were put out (v. 7)
5. Incense was not burned (v. 7) - see page 2
6. There were no burnt offerings (v. 7)

Because of these things, God's wrath was on Judah and Jerusalem (v. 8). Hezekiah took it upon himself as leader to cancel this wrath. "It is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, that His fierce anger may turn away from us. (V. 10) Then he spoke to the Levites to do four things. (V. 11)

1. Stand in God's presence. (He has chosen you)
2. Serve Him.
3. Be His ministers.
4. Burn incense to Him.

So they gathered themselves together (v. 12 - 15) and the first thing they did was sanctify themselves, then went in to cleanse the Lord's house as He commanded them. The priests went to the inner part of the house to cleanse it and brought out all the uncleanness they found, in to the court. From there the Levites carried it out to the brook Kidron. (V. 16) It took them sixteen days to complete the task. (V. 17) All the utensils were replaced, the altar rebuilt and the showbread table prepared. (V. 18)

When the Lord's house was ready, the king ordered a burnt offering to take place with the blood dashed against the altar. He-goats were used for a sin offering. Then great worship rose up led by the Levites with instruments of music, and the priests with trumpets. (V. 26) Now great singing and worshiping took place. (V. 29, 30)

Finally Hezekiah told them they were consecrated to the Lord (v. 31), thus Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people, because of what God had prepared for the people, for it was done suddenly. (V. 36) (God's glory appeared) And the Lord harkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. (30:20)

"So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel there was nothing like this in Jerusalem.

The priests and Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard and their prayer came up to God's holy habitation in Heaven". (Chr. 30:26, 27) I just think there may be something in all of this that will take us in the direction God has for His church in this city. Just the fact that God will forgive us, no matter how guilty we are, cleanse us in the blood of Jesus and then prosper us as we walk in His ways and obedient to His commandments.

Aren't you excited about what God has planned for this city, for our churches and for each of us? All it takes is commitment, hard work and a willingness to take God, our Father, at His Word. But the rewards are so great. We must not miss.

Let me leave you with a quote from Charles Crismier's book, "Out of Egypt – a prophetic call to the end-time church. "We are not ready for Christ's return. We either do not truly trust or we are in rebellion. Either way we are as unacceptable to be welcomed to the presence of a holy God as Israel was to enter God's Promised Land. We must come out of the Spirit of Egypt, and we must choose life. That involves a deeper heart – and – life commitment. Faith and trust are opposite sides of the same coin, and they are wedded together in obedience. (Page 195)

Bill Ferguson