

Theme: The church is a holy people who have been chosen by God, given a mission, and are sustained and inspired by our hope in the return of Jesus Christ.

I. Intro - Alice and Humpty Dumpty

- A. 'That shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents — 'Certainly,' said Alice. 'And only one for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!' 'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"' 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected. 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'
- B. Problem in 1 Thessalonians - wrong meaning for words
- C. Eschatology - not predictions; motivation to holiness
- D. But what does it mean to be 'holy'? Hasidic Jews? Amish; Holiness movement rules?
- E. Today we look at what it means to be a holy people

II. A Holy Chosen People

- A. A holy people are chosen and set apart by God
For we know, brothers **loved** by God, that he has **chosen** you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 1 Thess 1:4–5
 - 1. The Thessalonians were chosen by God

- 2. This meant they were loved by God as His people
 - 3. This is the fulfillment of God's election of Israel
It was not because you were more in number than any other people that **the Lord set his love on you and chose you**, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because **the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers**, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
Deuteronomy 7:7–8
 - 4. The basic meaning of the word 'holy' is to be separate and distinct
 - 5. We are holy, not because of what we do, but because of what God has done in choosing and saving us in Christ.
- B. God's holy, chosen people believe the Gospel
For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our **gospel** came to you **not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction**. 1 Thessalonians 1:4–5
 - 1. Paul can't see divine election, but rather its results
 - 2. The Gospel came to them powerfully by the Spirit
 - 3. This was not an empty proclamation, but the powerful Word used by the Holy Spirit to draw them
 - 4. The Gospel produced true repentance and faith
For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God... 1 Thessalonians 1:9

- a. They had received Paul and the team warmly
 - b. They repented by turning from dead, false idols
 - c. They embraced by faith the living, true God
 - d. (A reference to Jeremiah 10:10 where chosen people were called away from idols to the true and living God)
5. They received the Gospel with joy in spite of affliction
And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 1:6
- a. When God's Spirit is at work, even persecution can not stop the reception of the Gospel!
 - b. The Gospel is received with joy - no matter the persecution that may arise
6. The essence of holiness is turning from the false gods of our age and embracing the True, Living God by faith - no matter the cost

III. A Holy Mission

- A. The Thessalonians had a mission to model true holiness
And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 1 Thess 1:6-7
- 1. Their joyful reception of the Gospel even in affliction was a model for others to follow
 - 2. They had followed Jesus and the apostles - and now others should follow them!
 - 3. As those who have responded to the call of the Gospel, believers are a model for those to whom the Spirit is now calling

- B. The Thessalonians sent forth the word to other people and places

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. 1 Thessalonians 1:8

- 1. The Word of the Lord was ringing forth from Thessalonica
- 2. Although they were new to the faith, small in number, and suffering persecution, they were taking God's Word forth!
- 3. They were taking the Word locally (Macedonia) and far away (Achaia - Athens and Corinth)
- 4. As the Word went forth, so did word of their faith!

- C. A holy people have been set apart for mission - to send forth God's Word to other people and places

IV. A Holy Hope

- A. The Thessalonians hoped in the return of Christ
For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10
- 1. They had turned from dead false idols to the living and true God (reception of the Gospel)
 - 2. This also meant that they now became a people of hope - they were looking forward to the return of Christ

3. Their hope was in Jesus - Who had been raised from the dead!
4. They were imitators of Jesus (v6) in holding to God and His Word even under suffering - and if they followed Him in suffering they would also follow Him in glory!
5. The final day will be one of wrath for those who refuse God & the Gospel, but one of deliverance for all who embrace God & His Gospel by faith
6. A holy people look forward and long for the day when Christ returns - when evil is vanquished and faith is rewarded

B. The effect of holy hope

1. A holy hope inspires godly living and work now as we wait and long for the return of our Lord Jesus
We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and **your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.** 1 Thess 1:3 (NIV)
2. A holy people are sustained and inspired by our hope in the return of Jesus Christ to complete God's plan
3. Our hope in the triumphant return of Jesus inspires us to live for Him now - no matter the consequences
4. No one should be more hopeful than God's people - for we know Who rules, how the story will end, and the glorious life that awaits us!

V. Applying the Word

A. Do I understand holiness?

1. We do not agree with Humpty Dumpty theology - words do have meanings!
2. Do I understand the primary biblical meaning of holiness - to be God's chosen and called people?
3. Do I see that holiness is primarily about my standing as part of God's people - and not inconsequential external things such as food and clothing?
4. Do I understand that holiness begins when I embrace the Gospel? And that growth in holy conduct flows from the Gospel as well?
5. Do I see that as I meditate on and grow in the Gospel it will produce the fruit of a lifestyle distinct from the culture and its gods?

B. Am I fueled by hope into mission?

1. God's people should be people of hope
2. But our hope is not anchored in the things of this world or age - but in God's reign and the return of Christ
3. Am I oriented towards the ultimate goal - the final kingdom of God?
4. Do I believe and look forward to the consummation of all things at the return of Christ?
5. Does this hope inspire & fuel me for mission now?
6. Do I live in light of eternity? And do I know that what we do now really does echo in eternity?

C. Water Baptism

1. Water baptism is a visible symbol of holiness
2. We have been separated by God's election which leads to our embrace of the Gospel
3. In Christ we are dead to the world and its gods and alive to the True and living God
4. We live a new life now as we await the return of Christ and our final resurrection
5. The baptism of Ryan, Eli, and Hailey

A Holy People

1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 ESV

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Water Baptism - Rupprecht kids

Psalm 128:5-6

Teaching keywords: holiness; church; evangelism and missions; hope; endurance; election

May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, ⁶ and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel. Psalms 128:5-6

⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 ESV