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THE MEANING OF 'CLEAN & UNCLEAN' AND OF 'HOLY & UNHOLY'

The Bible frequently uses the terms "clean" and "unclean" and also the terms "holy" and "unholy". Are these expressions just synonyms ... i.e. is "clean" a synonym for "holy" and is "unclean" a synonym for "unholy"? Or do the words "clean" and "unclean" mean something different from what the words "holy" and "unholy" mean?

Let's examine these words and how they are used in the Bible more closely. Let's start with the word "holy".

THE WORD "HOLY"

The Hebrew word that is translated as "HOLY" in the Old Testament is the noun "QODESH". While this word is a noun, it is often added to another noun in the genitive (possessive) case to function like an adjective. Common examples of this joining of two nouns in this way are expressions like "my holy name", "holy garments", "your holy spirit", etc., where in each case the word "holy" is actually a noun in Hebrew. The noun "qodesh" is derived from the primitive root verb "qadash". This verb "qadash" is typically translated into English as "sanctify, hallow, dedicate, holy, consecrate". The noun "qodesh", because it is often used like an adjective, is typically translated into English as "holy, sanctuary, hallowed, holiness, dedicated".

Let's see the first time where this noun for "holy" is used, which is in Exodus 3:5 ...

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is HOLY ground. (Exodus 3:5 AV)

This is when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, which meant that God was PRESENT in that precise location at that point in time. Now while the noun for "holy" is never used in the Book of Genesis, the verb for "holy" (i.e. qadash) is used one time in the Book of Genesis, in Genesis 2:3 ...

And God blessed the seventh day, and SANCTIFIED it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. (Genesis 2:3 AV)

In the Hebrew "to make holy" and "to sanctify" are exactly the same word. Here in Genesis 2:3 we see that God made the weekly Sabbath days "holy", and God did this by putting His own presence into that day in a very specific way ... by ceasing from all the work He had performed during the previous six days.

These are the first two uses for these two Hebrew words. So let's now ask: exactly WHAT is it that makes something "holy"? Exactly what factor determines the holiness status of anything?

IT IS GOD'S PRESENCE, IN PERSON OR THROUGH HIS HOLY SPIRIT, THAT BESTOWS ON ANYTHING THE STATUS OF BEING "HOLY"!

Thus:

God pronounced the Sabbath holy because He had placed His presence into that specific day, and He is the One who set that specific day apart from the other six days of the week, to be reserved for a specific use. God pronounced the ground where Moses was standing to be holy because God was at that specific time present there. The spirit that emanates from God is holy because it is HIS, it belongs to God. The sanctuary was holy because God was also going to be present there. Certain garments that the priests were to wear at certain times were holy because they were reserved for certain duties during which the priest would approach God's presence. God's name is holy because it is GOD's name.

The key for the word "holy" is always that it applies to things that God has set apart, things that are directly connected to God and to the service and the worship of God.

Now let's look at the opposite concept, the word "unholy".

THE WORD "UNHOLY"

In the English KJV the word "unholy" is in fact only used one single time in the entire Old Testament, which is in Leviticus 10:10, a Scripture we will look at later. The Hebrew word used there is the noun "CHOL", which is used 7 times in the Old Testament. In the other six places where "chol" is used it is translated (in the KJV) as "common, profane, profane place".

The word "profane" will come up repeatedly in this discussion, so it may be good to get a clear understanding of its origin and what its primary meaning was when the Bible was being translated. The English word "profane" comes to us from the Latin language. The Latin word "fanum" means "a temple", and so the word "PROFANE" literally means "outside the temple, before the temple". In other words, anything that is "profane" is: "not concerned with religion or religious purposes, not holy because it is unconsecrated or impure or defiled" (Webster's Dictionary) ... it falls OUTSIDE OF THINGS CONCERNED WITH GOD'S PRESENCE!

Now the Hebrew noun "chol" is derived from the primitive root verb "chalal", which is typically translated into English as "to profane, to defile, to pollute, to desecrate". These English words range in meaning from "not reserved for any religious use" (profane) to "to destroy the sanctity of something" (defile) to "to contaminate and make impure" (pollute) to "to do something offensive to things that are sacred" (desecrate).

However, the usages of the Hebrew word "chol" in the Old Testament make clear that its meaning focusses on "something that is not in any way reserved for God or the service of God" WITHOUT ANY OTHER NEGATIVE CONNOTATION. It really often means nothing other than "outside of the temple" or "common". Thus 1.Samuel 21:4 says ...

And the priest answered David, and said, There is no COMMON (chol = unholy or profane) bread under mine hand, but there is HALLOWED (qodesh = holy) bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. (1.Samuel 21:4 AV)

Here the priest contrasted bread that had been set aside for use before God (hallowed or holy bread) with other identical bread that had not been set apart for such a sacred use (common or unholy bread). His point was that he did not have any bread in this second category available. Note also that in this verse "chol" is clearly the opposite of "qodesh".

Notice how David reasoned with the priest in the next verse ...

And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are HOLY (qodesh), and the bread is in a manner COMMON (chol = unholy or profane), yea, though it WERE SANCTIFIED (qadash) this day in the vessel. (1 Samuel 21:5 AV)

The point is: after the bread had fulfilled its purpose of being presented before God and was then replaced by fresh bread, the old bread lost its "holy" status and became "unholy" or "common" in a manner of speaking, if we accept David's reasoning.

In the Book of Ezekiel we have a discussion of the millennial Temple and sanctuary in the area of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 48:8-12 it speaks about an area reserved for the priests. Verses 13-14 then speak about an adjacent area reserved for the Levites. And the next verse speaks about an area that is still left over, which is to be an area for general housing in the city, but not reserved for any religious purposes. Notice ...

And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a PROFANE (chol = unholy or common) place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof. (Ezekiel 48:15 AV)

This use of "chol" (unholy) should make clear that there is not necessarily something wrong with something that is "unholy". The word simply tells us that something is not necessarily reserved for a specific religious purpose or use in the service of God. Ordinary common living areas and ordinary common bread and other foods qualify for the BIBLICAL term "unholy" or the term "common" (Hebrew "chol"), though we would not ordinarily think of attaching our meaning of the English word "unholy" to these common, ordinary things.

Keep in mind that in ENGLISH the word "unholy" has a very negative meaning indeed, as can be seen from Webster's definitions for this word "unholy" being: "impious, wicked, shocking, outrageous". However, the Hebrew word that is translated as "unholy" does not really have this totally negative meaning. That is precisely WHY the translators of the KJV chose to only translate this word ONE TIME as "unholy" and the other six times the word is used they clearly understood that the negative meaning we attach to our English word "unholy" was simply inappropriate and therefore they simply translated it as "outside of the temple" (i.e. "profane") or as "common". In English we recognize a vast difference in meaning between the words "unholy" and "common"; and this should tell us not to attach OUR MEANING of "unholy" to the passage where this word is used in the Old Testament. It would in fact have been better and more correct if the translators had also translated "chol" in Leviticus 10:10 as "common" rather than as "unholy".

So where the main criterion for the word "holy" is that it refers to something into which God has specifically put His presence or which is specifically set apart for a godly use, the main criterion for the word "unholy" is that it does not have any such "set apart" status, that it is simply not directly connected with the service and worship of God. However, this does not mean that something that is "unholy" is necessarily bad or evil or immoral ... as is evidenced from King David being quite willing to eat "unholy bread" and from God Himself setting aside certain areas in the environment of Jerusalem for "unholy dwellings".

Specifically, in the Old Testament "unholy" does NOT mean "defiled" or "impure" or "polluted"; it in fact means nothing more than "unconsecrated" and "not set apart". And it certainly does not automatically imply "unclean". Don't rely on the meanings you happen to know apply to the English words that are used ... when THE USAGE of the Hebrew word that is used makes quite clear that the negative English meaning is simply not justified.

Now let's look at the next word, the word "clean".

THE WORD "CLEAN"

While there are quite a number of different Hebrew words that are at times translated in the KJV as "clean", the word that applies in our context is the adjective "TAHOWR", which is formed from the verb "tahir".

The first use of this verb "tahir" is in Genesis 35:2 ...

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and BE CLEAN, and change your garments: (Genesis 35:2 AV)

Jacob here used the verb "be clean" to refer to "put away idolatry"; i.e. purify yourself and purge out wrong religious practices. The word is also used for cleansing and for purifying in a physical way.

The adjective "tahowr" was already used in the account about Noah taking the animals into the ark.

Of every CLEAN beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not CLEAN by two, the male and his female. (Genesis 7:2 AV)

And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every CLEAN beast, and of every CLEAN fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. (Genesis 8:20 AV)

The adjective translated "clean" obviously does not refer to the physical state of "clean" as opposed to "dirty". Rather, the word "clean" is here used by God to designate a specific category of animals and of fowls.

This Hebrew word "tahowr" which is translated as "clean" is also frequently used to describe gold, and then it is generally translated as "PURE", meaning gold from which all impurities have been removed. Thus ...

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of PURE (tahowr = clean) gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (Exodus 25:17 AV)

So notice: the word "clean" refers to removing impurities, getting rid of things that are wrong like idolatrous customs, and it also refers to meat suitable for human consumption, etc.. It does NOT necessarily have anything to do with "holy", because things can be "clean" without being "holy" ... not every "clean" animal is automatically "holy", as should be immediately apparent.

Now let's look at the word "unclean".

THE WORD "UNCLEAN"

The word "unclean" is a translation of the Hebrew adjective "tame", which is derived from the primitive root verb "tame" (i.e. the verb and the adjective are identical in biblical Hebrew). The verb "tame" is first used in Genesis in reference to Shechem who had sexually defiled Jacob's daughter Dinah.

And Jacob heard that he HAD DEFILED (Hebrew "tame" = made unclean) Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come. (Genesis 34:5 AV)

The word is also used for becoming unclean or "defiled" in a ceremonial sense ... for touching the dead bodies of "unclean animals". Notice ...

And for these ye shall be UNCLEAN: whosoever toucheth the carcase of them shall be UNCLEAN until the even. (Leviticus 11:24 AV)

Notice also Leviticus 11:31.

These are UNCLEAN (adjective "tame") to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, SHALL BE UNCLEAN (verb "tame") until the even. (Leviticus 11:31 AV)

The word "unclean" has to do with in some way becoming contaminated and not fit or suitable for certain things. Thus, animals that are unclean are unsuitable for human consumption ... we are not to eat any part of them. And people who are or become unclean are unsuitable for certain social contacts, usually for a limited and specified period of time.

So now we have looked at all four words in the Old Testament, since these are clearly all Old Testament concepts that have their roots in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Let's summarize what we have thus far seen.

Here is what we have:

HOLY: This refers to something that has been set apart by God Himself for a specific use or purpose. It may in all other regards be identical to something that is not holy. Thus, for example, "unholy" or "common" bread may be made from the exact same ingredients as bread that is "holy", and it may look identical to holy bread. The Sabbath, which is "holy" is in all other respects identical to all the other six days of the week ... starting at sunset and lasting 24 hours till the next sunset. People who are "holy" before God are in every other respect just as human as all the rest of humanity who are not currently "holy" before God. It is God's presence or a God-designated use that confers the status of "holy" on something.

UNHOLY: This word does NOT in the Bible carry the negative meanings which we are accustomed to attaching to our English word "unholy". In the Bible this word refers to all those things that are outside of the things concerned with God's presence, to all those things that God has NOT in any way "set apart" from everything else. Thus, in biblical terms things can be "unholy" and yet be acceptable for use by God's people ... such as "unholy bread" and "unholy housing areas". The Hebrew word for "unholy" does NOT automatically imply any kind of moral judgment ... there is no single example of this in the seven times that this word is used in the Hebrew Old Testament.

CLEAN: This word refers to something that has been cleansed or purified in some way. It may be that God has activated the clean status (as with pronouncing certain animals to be clean for human food). But often the clean status is achieved by something that THE PEOPLE had to do (go through a process of purification). Certain actions CAUSE a person to lose his clean status, and a specific procedure had to then be followed to reestablish the clean status. However, something that is clean is NOT also automatically holy.

UNCLEAN: This word refers to things that are in some way contaminated. Such contamination may be due to the fact that these things are not given a clean status by God to start with (as with all the animals that are unclean as far as food for humans is concerned). But often the unclean status will be the result of specific human conduct and behaviour and actions (as with Shechem sexually defiling Jacob's daughter, with people touching the dead bodies of unclean animals, etc.). Note that touching any living animal did not result in an unclean status ... or else people would never have been able to keep dogs or camels or horses or any other "unclean" animals.

So the following distinctions emerge between these terms.

1) The terms "holy" and "unholy" are independent of human conduct and actions. Wrong human conduct may defile something that is holy, but such human conduct can NEVER reduce something that is "holy" to now be "unholy"! Thus: human beings may defile the holy Sabbath days by wrong and unacceptable conduct, but such wrong conduct can never reduce the Sabbath to somehow become unholy. Areas that God pronounces to be holy (e.g. parts of the area of Jerusalem) can be defiled by human beings, but they can never make those areas unholy ... thus Moses could (theoretically) have defiled the area at the burning bush by refusing to take off his shoes, but such rebellious conduct would not have somehow made the area there unholy. Likewise, the Philistines could defile the holy ark of God by touching it and by placing the ark on a cattle-drawn cart, but such wrong conduct could never somehow make the ark of God unholy. The status of something being holy or unholy is totally independent of what human beings may do; it depends exclusively on what GOD has done or has determined.

2) The terms "clean" and "unclean" refer overwhelmingly to HUMAN CONDUCT! (I'll come to clean and unclean animals in a moment). It is our human deeds and actions that bring about the unclean state; whereupon God has set out a specific procedure by which the unclean state may be removed and the clean state restored.

3) So the words holy and unholy focus on what God has done or has determined. And the words clean and unclean focus on what we human beings do.

Now let me give you a speculation, something to think about. I certainly have no way of proving what I will now present, and perhaps it is not fully correct? But consider this.

A SPECULATION ABOUT "CLEAN & UNCLEAN"

As I have stated in previous papers, I am not a vegetarian. I eat meat fairly regularly. But I suspect that God CHANGED, or modified, His original intentions for man once Adam and Eve had made the choice to sin and to disobey God. God's statement in Genesis 1:29 implies to me that God's original intention was for human beings to not eat meat.

And God said, Behold, I HAVE GIVEN YOU EVERY HERB BEARING SEED, which is upon the face of all the earth, AND EVERY TREE, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; TO YOU IT SHALL BE FOR MEAT. (Genesis 1:29 AV)

And certainly, since God had only created one pair of each animal kind (i.e. one pair of cattle, one pair of sheep, one pair of chickens, etc.) it would have had to be AT LEAST several months to a year or longer before Adam and Eve could ever have even contemplated slaughtering a cow or a sheep in order to eat some beef or mutton. Otherwise the species would have died out within the first year of God having created these animal "kinds". Adam and Eve assuredly had to be vegetarians for a considerable period of time ... until the "clean" animals had had the chance to reproduce sufficiently to ensure the continued existence of all the species God had created. Likewise, there is simply no way that the pairs of

carnivorous animals like lions and leopards and wolves and crocodiles and tigers and hyenas, etc. could have eaten ANY meat in the first four weeks of their lives (at a rock-bottom minimum!) ... because that would simply have blotted out some of the species God had just created. But I can't see all those animals just going along contentedly for such a long period of time without having ANYTHING to eat. After all, God had very clearly provided abundant sources of food for MAN (Genesis 1:29 again) ... so God must surely have done the same thing for all the animals, provide abundant food supplies for them. Perhaps conditions were as they will be again in the future, as stated in Isaiah 11?

As far as man is concerned, that all changed very quickly ... as soon as Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden in Eden. I suspect that from then onwards God made provision for certain animals to be included in the food-chain for man (though it may still have taken some considerable time before that could be implemented?). And that brings us to "clean and unclean" animals.

By the end of the sixth day God had created man and all animal life (land animals, sea animals, birds and insects, etc.). And God pronounced it all to be VERY GOOD!

And God saw EVERY THING that he had made, and, behold, it WAS VERY GOOD. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31 AV)

Now consider: the overwhelming number of animals God had created were what we know as "UNCLEAN animals". How and why could God refer to this vast majority of life-forms as "very good" if they were in fact "unclean"? Had God in fact created all these different animals with the intention that they would be "unclean" in His sight?

If all these animals are "unclean", then WHY would God possibly have created spirit beings to serve in His immediate presence, when they largely resemble "unclean animals"? Or, to be more accurate, God had at an earlier stage already created spirit beings who would be in His presence, at His throne ... and then later, in Genesis chapter 1, God created some animals with the features He had given to some of these spirit beings around His throne, but God determined that these animals would be "unclean"?

Notice Ezekiel 1:10 ...

As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and THE FACE OF A LION, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had THE FACE OF AN EAGLE. (Ezekiel 1:10 AV)

Lions and eagles are supposedly "unclean animals". WHY would God possibly have given the looks of these spirit beings around His throne to "unclean animals"?

Here is the point:

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT GOD VIEWS ANY ANIMAL AS "UNCLEAN" BY ITSELF!

All the animals were created by God, and (probably) NONE are unclean before God in themselves. That is why in the millennium small children will be able to freely play with wolves and leopards and lions and bears and snakes (see Isaiah 11:6-8), all animals that we view as "unclean". But none were originally intended to somehow be "unclean". Bunnies and butterflies are also "unclean", but we may certainly touch them.

IT IS ONLY ONCE ANY ANIMAL DIES THAT THE QUESTION OF "CLEAN OR UNCLEAR?" ARISES!

For us to consider eating any animal requires that animal's death. And it is only in regard to considering which animals are suitable for us to eat and which animals are not suitable for us to eat that God established the classification of "clean and unclean animals". But as long as those animals are still alive, this classification is never an issue and does not apply.

And so in the matter of ceremonially becoming "unclean" the issue is always about touching the DEAD body of such an animal ... but there is no problem with touching any living animals out of that group (e.g. camels and horses and dogs and cats). So when Jesus Christ returns on "a white horse" (see Revelation 19:11), He is not pictured as returning on "an unclean animal" ... the unclean status only applies to animals that have died. When God wishes to convey power and majesty, God will often draw comparisons to animals that we consider "unclean" ... lions, eagles, etc..

So here is what I suspect:

Back in Genesis chapter 1 God had created all animals with the same "classification". They were ALL "clean" as long as they were alive ... so man could touch them, work with them, ride them, etc.. But once they died, they were ALL "unclean" as far as food for mankind is concerned. They were to be a part of the living environment for man, but NONE of them were intended for man to eat. There was no need for designating any animals as clean, as opposed to all the other animals not being clean. The matter of clean and unclean simply did not feature anywhere in the process described in Genesis chapter 1, because NONE of those animals were intended as food for man.

AFTER man had sinned, God changed MANY things from what He had until then intended. Many of those changes involve a certain amount of damage control ... because man had chosen to reject God's rule, therefore the parameters for human life had to be narrowed down to "contain" man's evil conduct to some degree. The flood with its accompanying destruction of life is probably the most dramatic of God's "damage control measures" to contain man's evil conduct. But there were also many other damage control measures that God enacted.

One of those changes involved changing what man may and may not eat. Without such a stipulation man may very possibly have become totally unrestrained in which animals he would include in his own diet? At any rate, God created a category of CLEAN animals, animals whose bodies we could touch and prepare for our own food, once they had been put to death. Perhaps it all goes back to the fact that once man had sinned, it became INEVITABLE by God's definition that blood would have to be shed in order to still make it possible to attain the goal and purpose for which God had originally created man ... to build the Family of God? It became inevitable that Jesus Christ would have to give His life as a sacrifice for our sins.

Consider this: In all the instructions that God gave to Israel about being "clean" it always required them TO DO SOMETHING ... be it abstaining from forbidden conduct, be it a process of purification for a woman after menstruation and after childbirth, or be it certain ritualistic washings to remove the unclean status. Becoming clean required actions. It almost seems to imply to me that after God had created ALL the animals in Genesis 1, once man had sinned God then TOOK SOME ACTION in order to place certain animals into the specific category of being "clean". All the animals God had created were "very good", but only a few were placed in this category of also being "clean".

God created the category of "clean animals" with the intention that this classification of clean and unclean would apply to DEAD animals, when we human beings might consider eating these animals. Additional instructions were also attached to these classifications (don't eat clean animals that die by

themselves, and don't eat their blood or their fat).

I am convinced that God's classification of clean and unclean animals was not at all some kind of an arbitrary process (like: "Hmm ... let's see now, which animals shall I allow them to eat?"). I am convinced there are very specific reasons why God does not want us to eat unclean animals. I am totally convinced that it would be detrimental for our health for us to eat any part of animals that are unclean. This is in addition to my conviction that knowingly and intentionally eating any part of an animal whose flesh God has pronounced "unclean" would amount to rebellion against God's rule over my life.

Anyway, I suspect that the classification of clean and unclean is really ONE OF GOD'S RESPONSES TO MAN SINNING! But the classification of holy and unholy, on the other hand, was made by God BEFORE any human beings ever sinned.

But let's take another look at all four words ... holy and unholy, clean and unclean. Consider the following analogy.

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION

You know the process. The word "repentance" means "to change the way we think", and as a result of our changed way of thinking we also often have to change many of the things we do. The word "conversion" refers to "receiving God's Holy Spirit", which changes our minds in dramatic ways. Repentance is what WE have to do ... we have to make a start at changing the way we think, the way we see ourselves. Conversion is what GOD does ... by giving us His Spirit He enables us to powerfully continue the process that was set in motion when we "repented". And the need for repentance (changing the way we think) was created by OUR CONDUCT (when Adam and Eve accepted a way of thinking that rejected God's authority over their lives). Without sin the need for repentance would never have arisen.

To me there is a clear parallel here.

"Unrepentant" is like "unclean", and "repentant" is like "clean"; and "unconverted" is like "unholy", and "converted" is like "holy". Not identical, but a fairly clear parallel.

Repentance and conversion are not the same thing; they are certainly not synonyms. But they are complementary processes. Repentance can take the process of change only so far; then conversion (the receiving of God's Spirit) becomes absolutely necessary to continue the process and take it to its intended conclusion. Further, repentance is a prerequisite for the process of conversion, but conversion can only follow repentance, it does not precede repentance. And so conversion is obviously not a prerequisite for repentance. The two terms, repentance and conversion, have a very clearly established relationship to one another. Had human beings not sinned, THEN repentance would also not have been a prerequisite for conversion.

Likewise, sin was the cause for the creation of the clean and unclean states. Prior to sin there was no such thing as "unclean". If we either ingest (i.e. eat) or else come into contact with (i.e. touch) something God has defined as unclean, THEN we become unclean, and then we have to follow the procedure God has laid down to eliminate this unclean state. [Comment: That was the case in Old Testament times. In a ritualistic way this is not applicable today.] That is like saying: we have to repent because we can see our spiritually unclean state.

The creation of some things being holy, while everything else is not holy is something we neither have any control over, nor is it something we have any input into. God decided what is holy and what is not holy. Likewise, the giving of God's Spirit (i.e. conversion) is also something we have no control over; it is something God controls absolutely. However, we do have guidelines and promises as to how God will go

about giving His Spirit to people (Acts 5:32; etc.), even as we have guidelines regarding what things God has made holy.

Now let's take a look at some of the Scriptures that use these different words.

LEVITICUS 10:8-11

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And THAT YE MAY PUT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOLY AND UNHOLY (Hebrew "chol"), AND BETWEEN UNCLEAN AND CLEAN; And that YE MAY TEACH the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses. (Leviticus 10:8-11 AV)

Here God had just killed Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu for offering "strange fire" before God. Then God spoke these instructions to Aaron. The priesthood was to teach the people "the difference" (literally "the separation") between the things GOD had made holy and those things God had not made holy, the "common" things, though not really what we in English mean by "UNHOLY". The difference in this case was THE USAGE God had determined for some things and not for other things. "Strange fire" was not to be used in service before God, even if it appears to be identical to the fire that God has instructed to be used. The priesthood was also to teach the difference between "the unclean and the clean"; i.e. between those who had purified themselves according to God's requirements and those who were polluted and contaminated with things that are not acceptable to God. To drink strong drink or wine before going into the tabernacle to appear before God was to become "unclean" or contaminated. [Comment: As mentioned already, it would have been more accurate to in this verse translate the word "chol" as "common" or as "profane" (i.e. outside of the temple), rather than as "unholy".]

THE HOLY PEOPLE

Several times in His dealings with Israel during their wanderings in the desert God referred to Israel as "an holy people".

For thou art AN HOLY PEOPLE unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 7:6; also Deut. 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9)

What this expression tells us is that God had SEPARATED ISRAEL FOR HIMSELF from the rest of humanity. Anything God has separated for a special use (in a positive sense) is "holy". Even though they were not going to have access to the Holy Spirit, ancient Israel had still been selected by God for a specific purpose, and that made them "an holy people".

When the expression "the holy people" is used in a prophetic sense, then it refers to those who are or will be the true Church, those who have received God's Holy Spirit. Thus the following verses are all about the Church of God.

And they shall call them, THE HOLY PEOPLE, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken. (Isaiah 62:12 AV)

And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and

shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and THE HOLY PEOPLE. (Daniel 8:24 AV)

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of THE HOLY PEOPLE, all these things shall be finished. (Daniel 12:7 AV)

Perhaps one of the clearer Scriptures, that shows that the holy state is something God determines without human input, is Jeremiah 1:5 ...

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I SANCTIFIED THEE (qadash = I made you holy), and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5 AV)

Jeremiah here had no choice or input in the matter of being "SET APART FROM THE WOMB" for a very specific job. It is this setting apart by God for a specific job that bestowed on Jeremiah the status of being "holy".

EZEKIEL 22:26

Here we have a statement that is also prophetic. Notice what God tells us ...

Her priests have violated my law, and have PROFANED (Hebrew chalal = to make common) MINE HOLY THINGS (Hebrew qodesh = holy): they have put no difference between THE HOLY (Hebrew qodesh = holy) and PROFANE (Hebrew chol = common), neither have they shewed difference between THE UNCLEAN (Hebrew tame = unclean, impure) and THE CLEAN (Hebrew tahowr = clean, pure), and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I AM PROFANED (Hebrew chalal = made common) among them. (Ezekiel 22:26 AV)

Here God is castigating the ministry (i.e. the priests being the religious leaders) for two distinct things. First of all the ministry does not show and teach respect for the things that God has set apart, that God has "made holy". The "Sabbaths" specifically fall into this category. In addition to that the ministry is also slated by God for making no distinction between those who have really repented (are clean) and have therefore been converted by the receiving of God's Spirit (made holy) ... and those who are still totally unrepentant (still unclean) and who have therefore NOT been converted (thus still unholy). Understand that in the prophetic sense God is not referring to physical THINGS as being clean or unclean, but to real life PEOPLE who have either repented or not repented.

Next, the Hebrew verb that is translated as "neither HAVE THEY SHOWED ..." is "yada", which really means "TO KNOW, TO PERCEIVE". In plain language: God is telling us in Ezekiel 22:26 that the ministry DOES NOT EVEN PERCEIVE THE DIFFERENCE between a person who is repentant and thus also converted, and a person who is still totally unrepentant and thus obviously also unconverted! When they go to counsel a person who has requested baptism, the ministers can't even tell the difference between one person who is really repentant and another person who is not repentant ... THAT is what God is telling us here in Ezekiel 22:26.

Do you grasp what this means?

It means that the ministry in the past 50 years has baptized MULTIPLE THOUSANDS of people who had

never ever come to a real godly repentance! What do you expect from a ministry that cannot discern between a really repentant attitude and a worldly repentance? THAT is a major component of the cause for the current problems God's Church is experiencing ... that multiple thousands of unrepentant people were baptized in the course of half a century! And some of them became ministers, who would go out and baptize MORE unrepentant people, and so forth.

This lack of real spiritual discernment on the part of the ministry is one of the root causes of the current problems the Church is plagued by.

But let's now look at the New Testament and the words that are used there.

THE WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

While the languages are different, the concepts are exactly the same in both languages.

The main Greek word for "HOLY" is "HAGIOS", an adjective which refers primarily to "separation from evil and from defilement"; i.e. it refers to something being "SET APART". The opposite concept to "hagios" is conveyed by the Greek word "KOINOS", an adjective that means "COMMON"; i.e. something that is NOT "set apart" in any way. It would also be in order to define "koinos" as "profane", i.e. as "outside of the temple".

The main Greek words for "CLEAN" are the verb "KATHARIZO" and the adjective "KATHAROS". They refer to something that has been cleansed. The opposite concept is conveyed by the adjective "AKATHARTOS", and this refers to something that has NOT been cleansed.

[Comment: Some confusion is created in the KJV where the translators translated the one Greek word "KOINOS" sometimes as the opposite of "holy" and at other times as the opposite of "clean". Thus in the KJV the word "koinos" is CORRECTLY translated seven times as "common" and one more time correctly as "unholy" (all eight usages representing the opposite of "holy"); and three times it is INCORRECTLY translated as "unclean". Likewise, the KJV translators also in one place CORRECTLY translated the verb "KOINOO" as "to make common", while in one other place they translated this verb INCORRECTLY as "unclean".

This indiscriminate way of translating these two Greek words does the following: First of all it creates unnecessary confusion about these concepts. Next, it also causes dictionary definitions to become blurred ... because the people who compile those dictionaries base their definitions on how they see the word translated in especially the KJV of the Bible. And then people who do not have a clear grasp of these differing concepts look at these "dictionary definitions" and they conclude that "these concepts must really refer to the same thing". Understand that different words in the same one language never mean EXACTLY the same thing ... otherwise there would be only one word for that particular concept, and not two or three different words. In this case, the lack of understanding on the part of the KJV translators resulted in them translating the words "koinos" and "koinoo" incorrectly in a few instances.

However, you who are a member of God's Church should have no difficulty at all in understanding that: 1) the Greek "hagios" is the equivalent of the Hebrew "qodesh"; 2) the Greek "koinos" and "koinoo" are the equivalent of the Hebrew "chol" and "chalal"; 3) the Greek "katharizo" and "katharos" are the equivalent of the Hebrew "tahowr" and "taher"; and 4) the Greek "akathartos" is the equivalent of the Hebrew "tame". So when you see these terms in the New Testament, you may well want to check up as to whether an incorrect translation of "koinos" or "koinoo" is involved.]

There is one other set of Greek words in the New Testament to be aware of.

The adjective "hosios" is translated as "holy", and its opposite "anosios" is translated as "unholy". These two words are clearly opposites, and they certainly tie in with the "holy-unholy" concept, rather than with "clean-unclean".

While various Scriptures in the New Testament all make specific points, THE CONCEPTS of what is meant in the Bible by the words "holy" and "unholy" and by the words "clean" and "unclean" is already quite clear from the way those words are used in the Old Testament.

Thus:

1) "Holy" always refers to something that God has set apart, or that God has put His own presence into. I see a parallel to this in the concept of "conversion", which is something that only God can bring about.

2) "Unholy" refers to things that are not in any way set apart by God. It is not necessarily something that is "bad". The best way to think of the biblical use of "unholy" is to replace it with the word "common". I see a parallel to this in the concept of "unconverted", which is the most "common" condition for humanity as a whole in this present age.

3) "Clean" refers to something that has been cleansed or made pure in some way. I see a parallel to this in the concept of "repentance".

4) "Unclean" refers to something that has become polluted or contaminated in some way. A very specific procedure has to be followed before the clean state can again be established. This is a way of highlighting the need for repentance. This process of restoring the clean state is something we ourselves have to get involved in doing. God will not do it for us, though He will certainly provide us with HELP to achieve that goal.

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