

Holy and Righteous Is Thy Name: God's Transcendent Purity

The Attributes of God – Session Nine

“The Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment,
and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.”
—Isaiah 5:16 NKJV

- I. Introduction
- II. Defining Transcendence
 - a. What is it?
 - i. Definition: “The exalted separation of God from his creation”
 - ii. “Wholly other”?
 - iii. God both Transcendent *and* Immanent (Jer. 23:23-24; WCF 7.1)
 - b. What use is it?
 - i. God is worthy of worship.
 - ii. God is unique and beyond comparison.
 - iii. God stands above all idols.
- III. Aspects of God's Transcendent Purity
 - a. Holiness
 - i. Vocabulary
 - 1. Old Testament (Hebrew): *קָדוֹשׁ* (*qadosh*)—“holy, separated, consecrated, set apart”
 - 2. New Testament (Greek): *ἅγιος* (*agios*)—“holy, sanctified, set apart”
 - ii. It's Central Significance
 - iii. It's Meaning
 - 1. Popular Conception: Mere Moral Superiority
 - 2. Biblical Conception (Twofold)
 - a. Ethical Aspect: Moral Purity (1 John 1:5)
 - b. Ontological Aspect: Separation (Ezek. 22:26)
 - i. Is God self-centered?
 - 3. God's Holiness: His Consummate Glory
 - a. “The holiness of God is not to be conceived of as one attribute among others; it is rather a general term representing the conception of his consummate perfection and total glory.”¹
 - b. “His moral attributes are the special crown; His intelligence and will are the brow that wears it. His holiness is the collective and consummate glory of His nature as an infinite, morally pure, active, and intelligent Spirit.”²

¹ Archibald Alexander Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Rewritten and Enlarged (New York, NY: Hodder & Stoughton, 1878), 163.

² Robert Lewis Dabney, *Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology Taught in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Presbyterian Publishing Company of St. Louis, 1878), 173.

- iv. Applications
- b. Righteousness
 - i. Vocabulary
 - 1. Old Testament (Hebrew): צַדִּיק (tsaddiq)—“righteous, just, innocent, pure”
 - 2. New Testament (Greek): δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē)—“righteous, just, innocent”
 - ii. Basic Meaning: Conformity to God’s standards
 - iii. Two Aspects
 - 1. Absolute Righteousness: Moral perfection God possesses in himself
 - 2. Relative Righteousness: God’s execution of his righteousness upon his creatures
 - 3. Three Distinctions
 - a. Rectoral: God’s righteous rule (Psa. 9:8)
 - b. Remunerative: God’s giving rewards for good (Psa. 58:11)
 - c. Retributive: God’s punishing evil (Rom. 2:6-7)
 - iv. God’s Righteousness Central to the Gospel
 - 1. How can man be righteous?
 - 2. Martin Luther
 - 3. The Glory of the Gospel of Christ
 - a. Romans 1:16-17 (NIV 1984): “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness *from* God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.””
 - 4. The Gospel
 - a. Our Problem: God is righteous; we are not.
 - b. Our Need: We need to be righteous.
 - c. The Solution: God accounts sinners righteous.
 - d. The Means: God gave his Son to stand in the place of sinners (double imputation).

Recommended Resources

Beeke, Joel R., and Paul M. Smalley. *Revelation and God*. Vol. 1. Reformed Systematic Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019; pp. 566-583.

Sproul, Robert Charles. *The Holiness of God*. 2nd ed. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998.

Watson, Thomas. *A Body of Divinity, Contained in Sermons upon the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism*. Rev. ed. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 1965; pp. 82-86.