

I Believe in God who is Holy

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: It is interesting that the writer of the **Belgic Confession of Faith did not include holiness as a specific attribute of God.** Yes, he did imply that God was holy when he talked about the sinfulness of man (Article 15), but why didn't he list holiness as a specific attribute of God? Maybe he wanted to keep the confession shorter. We don't know for sure. But don't take anything away from him because the Belgic Confession is a most remarkable document by one man. Later, the Westminster Confession of Faith was written by many learned saints at Westminster in England and **they learned from and improved on the Belgic Confession.** And, not surprisingly, they included holiness as an attribute of God.

Let us read one part of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the Doctrine of God.

WCF Chapter 2, Paragraph 1: Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, **most holy**, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

Our headings are:

The Doctrine of God's Holiness explained

The Doctrine of God's Holiness illustrated

The Doctrine of God's Holiness applied

Our goals are: **That after standing in awe at the holiness of God and seeing what you truly deserved as a sinner, you will be humbled and work for and worship the Lord more diligently.**

The Doctrine of the Holiness

1. God is holy – divinely perfect.

This means God is separated from sin. This means God always does what is right. This means that no one must therefore accuse God of sin. Even though holiness is a communicable attribute, God's holiness is so far ahead of man's holiness that you can never compare the God's holiness with man's holiness.

2. God is holy in his nature.

His very essence is holy. He never thinks about sinning. God cannot sin. God cannot look at sin. God declared himself to be holy. (Leviticus 11:45) If someone sins against God he is obliged (holiness requires justice) to eternally condemn that person or accept a better substitute for that sinner.

3. God is holy in his work:

God rewards holiness.

1 Samuel 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. 2 "**No one is holy like the LORD**, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God. 3 "**Talk no more so very proudly**; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.

God reproves the wicked. Even if it seems like God is unfair, he is not.

You might hear someone say: If God is holy why does he permit sin?

Why didn't he get Asia Bibi out of prison earlier?

It might have seemed that God's people were never going to see justice in Egypt, but God destroyed Pharaoh, showing his holiness. God could not look at Egypt's sin and Israel's unfair treatment forever.

Exodus 14:9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' 10 You blew with Your wind, **The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.** 11 "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, **glorious in holiness**, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

The Doctrine of God's Holiness illustrated

1. Let's consider the vision of Isaiah.

Isaiah 6: 1 In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord sitting on a throne**, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: **with two he covered his face**, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts**; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the **house was filled with smoke.**

The Lord is so holy that the holiest of angels are not able to look him. They must cover their eyes. His holiness and glory are too much for them. They say: Holy, Holy, Holy. These 3 "holies" remind you of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. Let's consider the vision of John.

Revelation 4: 1 After these things I looked, and behold, **a door standing open in heaven**. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, **a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.** 3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a

rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; **and they had crowns of gold on their heads.** 5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...

John sees God sitting on the throne. The throne clearly corresponds to the Mercy-Seat in tabernacle. God is not described by any human features so it was not an image. (We use a triangle to teach the Trinity.)

The things he saw pictured the glory and purity (holiness) of God. God was like jasper, a transparent stone which displays a variety of the most vivid colors, **signifying the glorious perfections of God.**

God was like **sardius** – a red stone that **signifies the pure justice of God.**

God was like rainbow that looked like an **emerald.** The rainbow's most common color was a pleasant green. This refers to the **reviving and refreshing** nature of the new covenant and God's promises. Remember how God gave the rainbow to man after he separated Noah and his family from the wicked world!

(The Pope recently wore a rainbow cross at a youth conference recently but not for the same purpose of reminding the people of God's promise. He seemed to show conciliation to those who are homosexuals.)

One more thing: **Jasper, sardius, and emerald were described in Ezekiel 28:13, as 3 of the stones that lined the Garden of Eden – that place of purity that Adam lost.**

Ezekiel 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

3. Let's consider another the vision of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 8:2 Then I looked, and there was a likeness, like the appearance of fire — from the appearance of His waist and downward, **fire**; and from His waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the **color of amber.** 3 He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the **seat of the image of jealousy** was, which **provokes to jealousy.**

Because of God's holiness, his anger was so great against sin that he literally burned against it! He had to act against Judah.

4. You see much of the holiness of God symbolically when the Lord appeared in all-white, showing his purity.

He did this on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Revelation, etc.

The Doctrine of God's Holiness Applied

1. God's holiness in his unapproachable light should leave you trembling; seeing your sins in front of a holy God should make you shake!

God's holiness amplifies the knowledge of how separate you are from him...and it should make you afraid if you are living in sin. His bright light exposes all your sins before God. Like the angels, you have to hide your eyes. Look at the cries of Isaiah when he was taken up into heaven in that great vision.

Isaiah 6:5 So I said: "Woe is me, for **I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips**, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

2. God is so holy you have to make preparation to appear before him.

The only preparation you can make is to have your sins removed through the substitution of Jesus in your place on the cross. His blood has to be counted as your blood.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

This passage flowed from Isaiah 53, about the Suffering Servant, and then flowed to the salvation to the whole world. Even sinful enemies are brought back into a right relationship with God.

3. God's holiness should make you want to worship him.

Yes, you could not approach him before, but now you can come close AND worship!

You can **fall before him in awe, as John saw when he was taken up for the visual in heaven.**

Revelation 4:8 The **four living creatures**, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty**, Who was and is and is to come!" 10 **the twenty-four elders** fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

The four living creatures were four angels who watched over God's people over the 4 corners of the earth. These angels were always praising God. They never stopped. They praised God because their hearts were pure, not tainted with sin. Their minds don't wander off about what's for lunch. The sight was too great to be distracted by the mundane.

The 24 elders joined with the angels to worship the Lord. Angels and the church join in Sabbath worship! The 24 elders cast down their crowns before God. This was how eastern subjects acted when they appeared before the king. God's holiness and glory made them do this! In fact, the Jews had a famous prayer in which they talked about "taking off their crowns" before God because they recognized their sinfulness and wanted his mercy.

The worship of the angels and the 24 elders was not "off the cuff" worship, but thoughtful and planned worship.

4. God's holiness means he must necessarily destroy the wicked, for he could not look on sin.

How could a holy God excuse sin without compromising his holiness? His holiness requires his justice. He could not lessen the punishment for sin. Sin requires death.

Habakkuk 1:13 You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

The prophet knew that God could not look at sin because he was holy.

Conclusion:

God is holy in his nature and in his actions. He therefore hates sin and demands perfect holiness. But God is also gracious and opens up the opportunity for sinful man to be reconciled to him and made holy by the substitution of Jesus in the place of sinners on the cross.

Beloved in the Lord:

1. Praise God day and night for the holiness of God. Cast your crowns before him in submission.

2. Praise God that he has provided a way for you to be cleansed of your sins and declared holy, something your first father lost. You were filth but now you are friends. You were crooks but now you are children.

3. Tell others how they can become holy. Tell them that Jesus' blood was shed so they don't have to spend eternity in hell and be separated from God for eternity.

Finally: Without holiness no one shall see the Lord. To be holy you have to have your sins forgiven. God only forgives the sins of those who plead that Christ died for them. If you are not a Christian, I hope you will do so today.