

God is Holy

We live in a day when people use the name of God very lightly. Flippant attitudes are expressed toward God. He is spoken of in a very casual, unscripted thoughtless manner. There is little reverence for God and no sense of his awfulness. Accordingly, there is little true worship of him.

Why is this the case? My answer is because the God of the Bible is largely unknown. Now the Bible is composed of the writings of the prophets and later of the Apostles or their associates. The writings were written about God and his interaction with people at his direction and through the work of His Spirit. Thus, the Bible is the true source of information about God. But the teachings of the Bible are ignored by millions who have access to them. In addition, a majority of churches across denominational lines do not teach the full biblical concept of God. The result of this ignorance or distortion is that people do not know or have forgotten that God is holy.

“Holy” is one of the most significant words applied to God and it, in fact, appears as *God’s special word* in the Bible. Listen to these selections from the Scriptures concerning the character of God:

1 Samuel 2:2 ESV There is none holy like the LORD [YAHWEH]; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Exodus 15:11 Who is like you, O LORD [O YAHWEH], among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

Revelation 15:4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Psalm 111:9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. ***Holy and awesome is his name!***

As these verses demonstrate, “holy” appears as God’s special word so much so that the bare adjective standing alone can have only one meaning - God. God is the Holy! This word sums up the nature of God. Actually, God is more often styled holy than he is called the Almighty.

The Bible relates that God swears by his holiness. *Once and for all I have sworn an oath by my holiness; I will not lie to David.* Psalm 89:35

The Lord GOD [Sovereign Yahweh] has sworn by His holiness. God swears by his holiness because it is a fuller expression of himself than anything else. It is the Lord's beauty and his glorious dress. In a way it is the attribute of attributes and can be joined with almost all of God's attributes as an expression of the very nature of God. God is love but he loves with a holy love. He has holy justice, etc. James Packer in Concise Theology writes, "The word signifies everything about God that sets him apart from us and makes him an object of awe, adoration and dread to us. It covers all aspects of his transcendent greatness and moral perfection and thus is an attribute of all his attributes pointing to the "goodness" of God at every point." (p.43)

The term "holiness" is used in two ways in reference to God. First, God is the absolutely holy One. God is holy in his very nature. As light is to the essence of the sun so holiness is to God's very being. Holiness is his inward character. This holiness speaks of God being absolutely distinct from all his creatures and above them in infinite majesty. There is none holy as the LORD - as Yahweh (1 Samuel 2:2). He is the only One who has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; no one has seen or can see Him, to Him be honor and eternal might. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:16)

This is God's unique status!

The basic meaning of "holiness" in both Hebrew and Greek is "to separate." God is totally separate from all else because he is holy. So, in the first sense the term "holy" refers to God's *awful* majesty - his wholly otherness of transcendent glory. A confrontation with God's majestic holiness is a soul-shaking experience. This was Isaiah's experience described in Isaiah 6. He writes, "I saw the Lord (Sovereign) sitting on a high and raised throne, and the hem of his robe *was* filling the temple. ² Seraphs *were* standing above him. *Each had six wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

³ And the one called to the other and said,

"Holy, holy, holy *is* Yahweh of hosts!

The *whole earth is full of his glory.*"^[b]

Holiness is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times. This is seen in both Isaiah's vision and John's vision in Revelation 4:8, "And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”*

A second way holiness is used with God is to refer to his ethical purity. This could be spoken of as his “efficient holiness.” God is absolutely pure, being separate from the slightest taint of sin. He is absolute perfection. God is faultless, spotless, impeccable, and unblemished.

The Apostle John says, “God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). God is moral perfection. Thus he loves the good and true, while he hates the false and evil. He is completely separate from sin.

Holy is the way God is. He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. Whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy. God has an absolute holiness within himself. However, there is a holiness which he shares with the angels of heaven, and he can both impute and impart it to sinners whom he redeems. Thus the holiness of God places a demand for holiness upon God’s people. God in the Bible says, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” God’ people who have been separated unto himself must reflect something of the character of the One who made them his own.

But no honest man can say, “I am holy.” Yet the Bible is very plain: only a holy people shall see God. *Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness, for without it no one will see the Lord.*(Hebrews 12:14 NET)

What is the answer to the dilemma in which we find ourselves?

The story of Isaiah the prophet (chapter 6) explains to us what the holiness of God means. He was confronted with the presence of God in holiness, in majesty. Beside the pure white purity of God, Isaiah cried out: “But woe is me, for I am unclean, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” The Bible says God took away his uncleanness and forgave His sins. He cleansed him with fire from his altar.

If we, sinners and unholy people, are to have dealings with the Holy God, then our wickedness and sin must be put away! We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ, even as Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by.(Exodus 34) We must take refuge from God in God! We must flee to Christ the Holy Son who died as the one cursed by God in our place. Here God’s word in 2 Corinthians 5:21;

²¹ *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Galatians 3:13

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A ^[a]TREE”.

We must depend on Jesus' blood to cleanse us from all sin. When we lay hold of Him by faith, God sees us as a partaker of his holiness. He sees us perfect in his holy Son Jesus Christ. God's holy demands against sin have been met by the Holy and Righteous One who did no sin and who knew no sin but was made our sin offering. A holy God must judge sin and sinners; He did this in Messiah Jesus. The psalmist wrote-Psalm 85:10, “Mercy and truth are met together, *righteousness* and peace *have kissed* each other. The only way of escape is by faith to lay hold of Jesus Christ who died for sinners.

Flee to him and having found him, you will manifest the holiness of God in your life as he works in you. God will give you his Holy Spirit that he might produce holiness in you to the praise of his glory, who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Amen.

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