

- I. Session 40: Holiness of God Part 1: Definition and God's Transcendent Majesty
- a. Purpose: In this lesson we will consider the definition of holiness, note the two-fold aspect of divine holiness, present biblical proofs concerning the Transcendent majesty of God and end with implications for our lives.
  - b. Definition
    - i. Arthur Pink: "Holiness is the very excellency of the Divine nature."<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. John Frame: "Holiness, then, is God's capacity and right to arouse our reverent awe and wonder. It is his uniqueness, his transcendence."<sup>2</sup>
    - iii. My favorite definition comes from Jerry Bridges: "Holiness, when used of God, is a comprehensive term to denote all that God is in His transcendent majesty and infinite moral purity."<sup>3</sup>
    - iv. Note how Jerry Bridges' definition acknowledges the two aspect of God's holiness ("transcendent majesty and infinite moral purity"). Others have noted the two aspect of God's holiness:
      1. Louis Berkhof: "The Scriptural idea of the holiness of God is twofold. In its original sense it denotes that He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty...But the holiness of God also have a specifically ethical aspect in Scripture..."<sup>4</sup>
      2. John Feinberg: "Scripture offers a two-fold picture of divine holiness. On the one hand, God is holy in that he is distinct or separate from everything else. Some call this aspect of divine holiness majesty-holiness. This aspect of God's holiness is the one less thought of...The second sense in which God is separate or set apart from everything in his moral purity and perfection, the concept we most often associate with divine holiness."<sup>5</sup>
      3. Given these two aspects of God's Holiness, in this session we will look only at one aspect, God's Transcendent Majesty
  - c. What we mean by God's Transcendent Majesty: "So transcendent majesty speaks of the infinite power, authority, royalty, dignity, and splendor that is God's."<sup>6</sup>
  - d. Proof from Scripture of God's Transcendent Majesty
    - i. The Hebrew word for Holiness
      1. "The Hebrew word translated as holy is *qadosh*, which basically means 'separate.' Old Testament scholar E.J Young says that qadosh signifies the entirety of the divine perfection

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 2006), 61.

<sup>2</sup> John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), Location 266 of 2821.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 73.

<sup>5</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 340, 342.

<sup>6</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), Location 289 of 2821.

- that separates God from His creation, including His complete separation from all that is sinful.”<sup>7</sup>
2. Referring to *qadosh*, Louis Berkhof said, “It is one of the most prominent religious words of the Old Testament, and is applied primarily to God.”<sup>8</sup>
  3. If this term is used to describe God, we see God is definitely set apart from everything else.
- ii. **Exodus 15:11**= “*Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?*”
1. Context: Song of Moses after God saves the Hebrews from Pharaoh’s army.
  2. Three rhetorical questions
    - a. First rhetorical question plainly reveal how the God of the Bible is different from the other pagan gods.
    - b. Second rhetorical question reveal no other God is “*majestic in holiness*”
    - c. Third rhetorical question reveal no one could be awesome and do the wonders that God has done. He is majestically different than all other ‘gods!’
  3. What is significant about knowing the context is that Moses can sing this song about the uniqueness of God because of the evidences He has seen with the work of God in the exodus!
- iii. **1 Samuel 2:2**= “*There is no one holy like the Lord, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.*”
1. Context: Song of Hannah after God has given her a son name Samuel after dedicating him to serve God.
  2. Verse emphasize the uniqueness of God with the use of “*no one*” like God.
  3. First part of the praise clearly states “*There is no one holy like the Lord*”
  4. We might say there are others who are holy but here Hannah has the idea of intrinsic holiness, that is, holiness in of Himself. No one is Holy like that, except God.
- iv. **Hosea 11:9**= “*I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in [a]wrath.*”
1. This verse does show an overlap of the two aspect of God’s holiness since we see there’s a moral aspect to it, that God keeps His promise and there’s mention of judgment of sins. We will see this verse later again in our series.

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<sup>7</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), Location 265 of 2821.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishign Company, 1996), 73.

2. Note the line: *“For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,”* which shows metaphysically God is a different being.
  - a. God denies he is a man.
  - b. God is not a man because:
    - i. He is God.
    - ii. He is *“the Holy One”*
- v. **Isaiah 6**
  1. Context: This is Isaiah’s vision of heaven in which sets the motion for Isaiah’s commission.
  2. Note verse 1 does emphasize God’s holiness.<sup>9</sup>
    - a. Sitting on the Throne= Rule
    - b. He is high and lifted up= Exaltation
    - c. The train of His robe fills the temple= Infinite Worth
  3. The Seraphim's praise of God: *“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory” (v.3)*
    - a. Only attribute of God that is praised three times.
    - b. Note that God’s Holiness is connected to His glory.
- vi. **Luke 1:49**= *“For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.”*
  1. Context: Mary sings this song known as the Magnificat while pregnant with Jesus the Messiah.
  2. God here is the Mighty One in the context of the song and yet *“And holy is His name.”*
  3. There is an association of God’s great and unique work with His Holiness.
  4. Is important to note that the concept of God’s Transcendent Majesty is also taught in the New Testament too.<sup>10</sup>
- vii. **Revelation 4**
  1. Context: This is a scene in heaven that echoes **Isaiah 6**.
  2. We see here again *“Holy, holy, holy”* in **verse 8**.
  3. We see this worship of God as Holy is in conjunction with the creatures’ worship of God as uniquely, that is, as creator in **verse 11**: *“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they<sup>10</sup> existed, and were created.”*
  4. God as creator is one of the ways God possesses Transcendent Majesty.
- viii. God’s Unique attributes attests to the doctrine of God’s Transcendent Majesty
  1. There are attributes of God that sets Him apart from His creation and creatures.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to chapter two of Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> A point made by John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 340, 341.

2. Some of those attributes we have already discussed in this series
    - a. The Asiety of God
    - b. The Sovereignty of God
    - c. The Simplicity of God
  3. There's also other attributes of God that also shows God's transcendent majesty such as:
    - a. The eternity of God
    - b. The immutability of God
  4. We must also remember that given God's Transcendent Majesty even other attributes of God that we see imaged in man, creatures and creation such as love and righteousness is still different in quality and quantity within God.
- e. Implications
- i. **Psalms 99** draws the implication that because God is Holy, we should worship Him (**Psalm 99:3, 5, 9**). So...
    1. **Do we worship God with awe and wonder?**
    2. **Do we worship God because He is Holy?**
  - ii. We have seen some of our passages teaches about God's transcendent majesty and uniqueness in the context of songs (Song of Moses, Song of Hannah, Song of Mary); **do we also sing joyfully about God's holiness?**
  - iii. Do you show a sense of respect for God since He is Transcendently Majestic?
  - iv. The root of some of our problems with sins is idolatry; therefore we need to meditate and worship a much more majestic God of the Bible if we are ever going to rid the idols in our lives.