



(4) The Holiness of God

Grasping God's untouchable way (Ps 68:17)

Did you ever stare into the bright sun? We just can't do that nor can we fully grasp God's holiness. God is light while we, being tarnished with impurities, can't easily approach Him unless we carefully follow His terrific plan to bridge this gap.

1) God's Holiness

- God's holiness is that remarkable, other worldly, brilliant display of God's unsullied person and purpose, not in the least dulled by any hint of inferiority, self-seeking display or pretense. "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness" (Ps 68:17).
- God's transcendence should not be interpreted to mean that God's holiness or other attributes are limited to the distant sky or invisible world, leaving us saddled on the dark world. Remarkably, Jesus came to this world to pronounce God's saving involvement on earth, and yet being without sin. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).

2) Holiness Defines God

- "Holy" means set apart, distinguished and therefore sacred, hallowed, and dedicated. The word is used 581 times in the Bible, giving us a clear clue that God's holiness is the central problem to sinful man.
- "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Positively, holiness defines all that is pure and sacred; negatively, holiness by nature counters all that is dark and evil.
- Although the word "holy" is not used in Genesis (except sanctified Gen 2:3), God's holiness was clearly visible in judgment in every scene where the disobedience of man or angel appears. God's holiness immediately thrusts a great barrier between His holiness and sinful man, whether it be in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), the exile of Cain (Gen 4:16), the great flood (Gen 6:7) or the division of men (Gen 11:7-8). God's holiness assures sinful man that if he approaches God, then he will be judged.
- The topic of covenant is introduced in Exodus and onward through the Pentateuch and scriptures ('holy covenant' Dan 11:28,30; Lu 1:72).
- Everything associated with God is holy:
 - Holy ground (Ex 3:5)
 - A holy assemble (Ex 12:16)
 - A holy nation (Ex 19:6)
 - And so forth: Holy men (Ex 22:31); Holy place (26:34); Holy garments (28:2); Holy gifts (28:38); Holy anointing oil (30:31)
 - "Holy, holy, holy" (Is 6:3) brings our attention to God's thrice holiness but Rev 4:8 declares the eternal state of His holiness, "and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD".

Summary: The old covenant hid man's sin from God who dwelt in the tent above the cherubim. "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (De 7:6). The new covenant through Jesus, however, brought God's holy person right in their midst, making them a "holy nation" at a whole different level. "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

3) Practical Implications of God's Holiness

- It is impossible for flaws to tatter God's holy name or character, nor can He overlook sin in any person's life.

- God made man holy in His image and so open fellowship was natural, good, and desirable—in both directions. “God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’” (Gen 1:26). The whole concept of mankind improving himself through the ages, whether accidentally or purposely, is simply ridiculous proven by the selfishness of people in every daily paper.
- God devised the Gospel not to make man a bit better, as then he could still not fellowship with God, but completely holy through Jesus Christ’s death on the cross where God’s wrath was fully poured out on His Son, thus enabling man to be pardoned. “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Ro 5:9). Being saved means reconciled to God as man had originally been made.
- Toleration of sin in our lives is an admission of a flawed understanding of God (1 Cor 5:7). The phrase, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God” (Jud 13:22) makes full sense because of man’s sinfulness and God’s holiness.
- Judgment and wrath flows from God’s holiness, and it is this perfect demand for holiness that makes man’s sinfulness so horrible and worthy of judgment. “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (Rev 20:11-12).
- When nurturing Christians, individually or in a church, we must understand God’s demand for holiness (1 Cor 10:21-22). “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (1 Cor 11:30).
- The greater the revelation of God, of His grace and holiness, the higher the expectation of holiness. We saw Ananias & Sapphira dedicating large sums to the church and yet the Holy Spirit judged them with death because they said they donated all but held back some. “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3).
- The Spirit of God is known as the “Holy Spirit” (92 times in Bible) as it manifests God’s holy person and purpose. God’s dwelling and change of His people come from His Holy Spirit living in them making them a holy temple of God.

Summary

God’s holiness makes His majesty glorious, but not willing to merely display His holiness to those who lost it, having been made in His image, through Christ’s death created the gospel by which man might cleanse themselves from all their sin and come fully in God’s presence and even be seated on the right hand of Christ (Eph 2:6).

Conclusion: Personal Steps to Know God

- People were made with the natural desire to know and serve God so that awareness of their deficiency (i.e. guilt) is always lurking deep inside.
- The Gospel, devised and sacrificially made through Jesus, serves as the bridge to come before our holy God.
- Since God sent His Son to die for us and reconcile us to Him, we can fully trust His method to forgive and sanctify us to come before Him, our holy God.
- We are accepted as God’s holy ones (saints) not because of religious acts, attempts to improve our morality, but because we are covered in Christ’s righteousness (i.e. justification by faith). “Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith” (Rom 3:20-25).
- Only through the gospel can God’s people be sanctified (literally mean to be holy). “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

• Study questions

- Share one glimpse that personally enabled you to better understand God’s holiness.
- Why is judgment of sinners so necessary?
- Why are religions so inept at helping reform or save mankind?
- How does God resolve the problem of our sins through the Gospel?
- What sin do you tend to hide in your lives, thinking it does not matter that much? Does it?

“He only is independently, infinitely, and immutably holy. In Scripture He is frequently styled ‘The Holy One’: He is so because the sum of all moral excellency is found in Him. He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin.”⁶

⁶ The Attributes of God by A.W. Pink.