

## Message – God is Holy (Final)

Of all the messages I have prepared, none has overwhelmed me more than researching this attribute of God. I felt so unworthy, so inadequate and so convicted as I came to realize more than ever the awesome holiness of God.

God's Holiness is displayed from Genesis to Revelation. God's Holy Word, the Holy Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, conveys to us the holiness of God. "In the beginning God created..." The first words of Genesis tell us about God's holiness, His being totally distinct. There was nothing but God in our concept of time, "the beginning," and the word "to create" "bara" is used only of God creating, never of humans making things. Here it implies creating something from nothing. That is distinctly only God can do – creating something from nothing.

In the last book of the Holy Bible, Revelation, we have the heavenly beings "Day and night they never stop saying 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come.'" (Rev. 4:8) Are you aware that of all God's attributes, God's holiness is the only attribute being declared 24/7 in heaven? Nowhere do we read, "love, love, love" or "good, good, good" nor anything else but only "holy, holy, holy." Being repeated three times takes it to the superlative degree. That's holiness raised to the highest degree possible – perfectly holy. Repeating a word three times makes it an emphatic statement that you don't want to miss nor overlook. Everything about God is holy.

Then, we have everyone's favorite Book --- Leviticus. Not really, anyone here read from Leviticus this past week?

Holiness is the major theme in Leviticus. In Lev. 19:1, the sermon on the mount in Leviticus started with, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.'" Then guidelines were given on purity and righteous conduct towards God and each other. Israel was to be separate from the other nations, clean from unclean -- A holy nation.

The Israelites were to be role models of holiness in everything, including what food is permitted. The Mosaic dietary law is a recognition of the divine order of creation. According to Dr. Eli Eyzenberg, of the Israel Bible Center, "They were permitted to kill animals for food, but only those that best exemplifies divine order. That's why amphibians were forbidden because they lack a definite place, water or land. Others were forbidden because they lack clear form – sea creatures that lack a shape of defined fins and scales; land animals that are not ruminants with clearly defined cloven hoofs. Creatures that prey on others are also forbidden."

Lev. 20:26 (NIV) "You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own." In other words, God is saying, "Since I your Lord is distinctly pure so should you be."

In Leviticus, God gave very detailed instructions regarding offerings and sacrifices. Why? Because offerings and sacrifices served as coming close to God. Carelessness was fatal as in the case of Nadab and Abihu. After the two died, Moses told their father, Aaron, why: "The LORD said, " 'Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.' " In other words, always be careful to treat God as holy, if not, you dishonor God publicly.

### **What is holiness?**

One definition in the Lexham Bible Dictionary is holiness is the summation of all of God's character: "Holiness is not one attribute of Yahweh's among others; rather it is the most perfect and exemplary nature of Yahweh as God."

As used in Scripture, holiness describes both the majesty of God and the purity and moral perfection of His nature.

According to the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, "Biblical use of the term "holy" has to do primarily with God's separating from the world that which He chooses to devote to Himself. As God's redemptive plan unfolded through the OT, the "holy" became associated with the character of God's separated people conforming to His revealed law. When the time became ripe for the saving work of Jesus Christ, His redeemed people came to be known as saints (literally, "holy ones")."

Holy means set apart as distinct, as unique, commanding respect. It also means consecrated. In Leviticus everything that's holy, except God, did not start as holy, they had to be set apart to be holy. God, on the other hand, is holy all by Himself, distinct and unique. His holiness is not dependent on anyone or anything else. Primarily, God is totally separated way above and beyond His creation. God is in a class by Himself.

Exodus 15:11 says "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"

### **God is Holy**

The holiness of God embodies His whole character. It is the centerpiece of all His attributes. God's holiness is essential to understanding who and what He is.

According to Jerry Bridges, God's holiness is the perfection of all His other attributes: His power is holy power, His mercy is holy mercy, His wisdom is holy wisdom. It is His holiness more than any other attribute that makes Him worthy of our praise.

Holy is the defining attribute of God. God even calls Himself by that title. Throughout the Old and New Testament, He is called "The Holy One." For example, when Mary exclaimed her praise to God when the angel told her that she was chosen to be the mother of the Savior, she said in Luke 1:49, "He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

In Psalm 89:35, God swears by His holiness regarding His covenant with David. "I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness— and I will not lie to David." Why would God swear by His holiness? Because it is the complete expression of His character. Holiness is the heart of who God is.

### **Close Encounters with a Holy God**

Now, let's look at some Biblical illustrations of the effects of encountering God's Holiness.

In Job 42:5-6, we have Job's reaction after God interviewed him in a real and personal experience.

"I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Encountering God up close and personal caused him to not only to lose whatever self-esteem, in Job 1:1, Job is called blameless, but now even he hates himself. He is also compelled to humbly repent before God.

Now, consider the prophet Isaiah. King Uzziah, a good and beloved ruler of Judah, just died and Isaiah was probably feeling sad. Then, the King of kings revealed Himself in all His glory to Isaiah. One by one, the seraphim declared “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Here’s the prophet’s reaction...

Isaiah 6:5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

“Woe to me” Isaiah declared a curse on himself. The word “ruined” also means “destroyed,” “unraveled.” Isaiah said “I’m coming apart” because he saw God in all His awesome holiness.

When you face God’s holiness, He affects your self-esteem. You discover you are not what you thought you were under God’s pure spotlight. We do not take living the Christian life seriously enough because we don’t fully appreciate who our God is. As our model prayer goes, we must hallow His name. We must worship Him seriously. We must quit playing church, stop playing Christianity. Most people hurry to be at work on time because they don’t want to upset the boss. But they come to church saying, “As long as I get there before the message, I’m on time.” When God sees us treating our bosses better than we treat Him, He says, “You don’t know who I am. I am the Holy One.”

In Ezekiel 1, there’s the prophet Ezekiel in exile, homesick for Jerusalem, by the Kebar River in Babylon. Unlike Isaiah, he didn’t hear angels stating “Holy, holy, holy...,” but He witnessed a vision showing the sublime holiness of God. The Lord, Yahweh, unlike pagan gods, sits alone on His throne, set apart from all inferior creatures. The vision screams nothing but absolute superlative holiness. Ezekiel 1:28 “Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around Him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” Here’s Ezekiel reaction, “When I saw it, I fell facedown...”

Encounters with God’s holiness is indeed an awesome and very humbling experience.

On a lookout perch of a Navy ship just after midnight somewhere in the Indian Ocean, I met my Lord. I did not believe there was a god or anything spiritual at that time. Christian friends have witnessed to me but I still struggled with the concept of a divine being. Earlier that evening, my friends prayed for my hypothetical prayer – that is, to be able to believe in God like they do. It was then past midnight during my lookout watch duty. Feeling bored, I looked up at the bible black, starless sky and said, “let’s settle this once and for all, if there’s a god, prove it to me. Show me a shooting star.” After several minutes, the verse, “you shall not test the Lord your God” started burning in my heart. At that moment, for the first time in my life, I saw myself as a hopeless wretched sinner, not cool at all. I was totally appalled at myself. Mortified and broken, I fell on my knees and said, “who am I, but a speck of dirt, that you would lower yourself to prove anything to me. My friends told me to call on Jesus to be saved. So, I call on you Jesus, Lord, help me believe.” Immediately, I felt the heaviness in me lifted away and I finally found the peace that I’ve been searching for. I believed. Doing this message, my Lord brought me back to our predestined encounter that night in February 1974, that, instead of a shooting star, God introduced me to the holy bright Morning Star, my Lord Jesus.

## **Be Holy**

### **1. Holy Life is your calling**

There are attributes exclusive to God such as omnipotent, omniscience and omnipresent. However, holiness is the one attribute we're supposed to image. In fact, not only are we to image holiness, God commands us to be holy.

From the Old Testament through the New Testament, there are mandates to be holy.

To Israel...

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." (Lev. 19:1)

To the church today...

"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15-16)

God calls every Christian to a holy life without exception. This calling is not limited to the clergy such as pastors, missionaries and church leaders. Every Christian lawyer, teacher, engineer, doctor, retiree or even a CEO is called to a holy life.

Have you heard of "cancel culture?"

[Cancel culture or call-out culture is a modern form of ostracism in which someone is thrust out of social or professional circles – whether it be online, on social media, or in person. Those subject to this ostracism are said to have been "cancelled". This mostly applies to speech or behavior considered politically incorrect by the popular culture today. The rise of "cancel culture" and the idea of canceling someone coincides with a familiar pattern: A celebrity or another public figure does or says something offensive. A public backlash, often fueled by politically progressive social media, ensues.

Then come the calls to cancel the person — that is, to effectively end their career or revoke their cultural prestige, whether through boycotts of their work or disciplinary action from an employer.]

But, we are not called to conform to popular culture.

Sadly, there is something like a "cultural holiness." These are Christians adapting to the behavioral pattern of other Christians. Since the Christian culture is more or less holy, then these Christians are more or less holy. However, God did not call us to be like those around us. God called us to be like Himself. Holiness is conformity to the character of God.

The problem with a so-called "cultural holiness" is the development of a "holier than thou attitude" due to comparison with other Christians. However, the ultimate and only standard of Holiness is God and with God as the standard there is no room for a "holier than thou" mindset.

### **2. Holy Life is not an option**

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14, NIV)

No, this verse is not saying that salvation depends on attaining some degree of personal holiness. God's Word clearly says that nobody can ever earn salvation through his or her personal holiness. "All our righteous deeds are worthless filthy rags" meaning our best efforts are stained and polluted with sin.

A believer becomes positionally holy when regenerated or born again. ("But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor 6:11) At the moment of regeneration, the believer is set apart by God from the world. The Holiness of Christ is imputed on us. The writer of Hebrews is referring to our practical transformation in being Christ-like. A believer should strive daily to be separated from anything sinful. This is progressive holiness, that is continuing to be more and more like Christ. This involves our cooperation and obedience to the Holy Spirit. This progressive holiness is the evidence of a born again believer because only a saved person has the ability, through the Holy Spirit, to live in peace and in holiness. Living in peace means loving one another. Striving for a holy life is the fruit of loving God. If we truly love God, we must live a holy life.

In other words, holiness in every aspect of life should always be the passion and goal of everyone who has been set apart in Jesus Christ.

Realizing the awesome holiness of God and His command to be likewise holy... We come to the important question...

### **Now What?**

Take an inventory of your pursuit of holiness.

We must be serious about our personal holiness. Most of the time we are too casual about sin in our lives. You can't say, "Oh, everyone does it" or "well, it was just a mistake." No, you don't know who God is.

I, for one, compromise with unholy behavior more often than not. We push God aside when obeying Him interferes with our enjoyment and pursuit of pleasure. Of course, on our own, a holy life is impossible to maintain, but, we're not alone. As born again Christians we have the Holy Spirit enabling us to be holy. In the presence of our Holy Father, the Most Holy One, real change is required. We can no longer profane or make common, God's Holy Name by any unholy lifestyle.

In view of being holy, take a personal inventory of how you spend your time, where you spend your money, how you treat one another, your conversation with unbelievers, your entertainment choices and your social media involvement. Are you moving toward being holy as your LORD is holy? Do you image your LORD to the world around you?

Let's dedicate the rest of our lives to giving our Lord praise and glory by our holy living.

Please join me in closing this message by joining the angels in worshipping our God, the Most Holy One...

**"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev. 4:8)**