

Sunday, June 5, 2022

CLOSER TO GOD (18)

Holiness (2)

The Holiness of God

Last week we began addressing the subject of holiness. This is a crucial theme if we desire to draw closer to God. Last week we introduced holiness, by examining the book of Leviticus and noting some passages that call for us to be holy. Clearly we need to be holy if we desire to be in the presence of God (1 Peter 1:15-16). A substantial reason is because He is holy. So, in this lesson, I want to talk about God. I would like to develop the holiness of God a little more.

There is so much to be about this subject. Here we will notice a handful of observations associated with His holiness. My goal in this is for us to understand who God is AND who we are in His presence. IF we are striving to draw closer to God, we need to think deeply about Him.

I. **God is holy**

- a. It is THE descriptive term of God – when we think of God, there are many qualities that come to the forefront – His grace and mercy, His love, His mighty power, righteousness, wisdom, etc. And while each of these deserves attention, the description that ought to stand out the most is His holiness.
 - i. It is the holiness of God that makes Him who He is in relation to us. It is His holiness that validates all the other above qualities (grace, love, power, etc.).
 - ii. Leviticus 19:2, 1 Peter 1:16 – Be holy, for I am holy. Psalm 99:9, *Exalt the Lord our God, And worship at His holy hill; For the Lord our God is holy.*
 - iii. Isaiah 6:1-5, Revelation 4:8 - Describing the throne of God and creatures around it are praising Him always. BOTH of these examples use the expression, “Holy, holy, holy” (Holyx3). Commentators note that in Hebrews this is a superlative (something that expresses the highest or a very high quality). To emphasize greatness, they would repeat a quality (e.g. 2 Kings 25:15 speaks of “fine gold” – ‘gold,gold’; “pit, pit” – “full of asphalt pits” (NKJV) – Genesis 14:10). The TRI-repetition emphasizes even greater emphasis. Exodus 26:33, describing the divider between the holy place and “most holy” place, it is literally, “holy,holy”
- b. His nature is holy
 - i. **Perfect** –
 1. Often when we speak of perfection, we think of something that is as good as it is going to get. We might see something that has no flaws or is complete. And of course, we are viewing this from our imperfect eyes and flawed reasoning.
 2. But when we speak of God being perfect, we mean this in its purest form. There is not the slightest flaw or imperfection in Him. He is the very epitome of what is pure. And as with so many of His qualities, while we will NEVER achieve them, we strive for them.
 3. 2 Samuel 22:31 - *As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.*
 4. Matthew 5:48 – be perfect, as God is perfect.
 - ii. **Pure** –
 1. When we think of purity, we see that which is both unpolluted and undiluted. BOTH are descriptive of God. He is purity personified.
 2. Job 4:17, Eliphaz asked Job, *‘Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?’*
Psalm 18:26, *“With the pure You will show Yourself pure.”* (From 2 Samuel 22:27)
 3. In His purity, He cannot and will not be in the presence of wickedness.

- a. Habakkuk 1:13 - You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness...
- b. God is light, in Him is no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5 – we know this is a contrast between good and evil, that which is pure and that which is impure.
- c. He cannot dwell with sin – Joshua 24:18-20 – In Joshua’s farewell address, he identifies their stubbornness and corruption, nothing that they cannot follow God. They say they will but Joshua says, *“You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.”*
- d. Prov. 6:16-19 – describes 7 things God hates...
- e. Isa. 59:1-2 – your iniquities have separated you from your God.
- f. Psalm 24:3-4 – implies His purity when David asks, *“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...”*

iii. **He is uniquely holy** –

- 1. God’s holiness is so great that none can achieve it. It is so unique (one of a kind, different) that we cannot fully grasp it in this life. All we can do is strive to understand it based upon what He has told us.
- 2. Isa. 6:3, Rev. 4:8 – the “holy, holy, holy” expressions show this.
- 3. Exodus 15:11, the song of Moses after Israel crosses the Red sea, he says, *“Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?”*
- 4. Isaiah 40:25 challenging the idolatry of the land, the LORD through Isaiah declares, *“To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One.”*

c. **His characteristics show His holiness**

- i. **Eternal** – Isaiah 57:15 – the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. The very fact that God preexists the whole of creation sets Him apart and ABOVE all that is in it.
- ii. **Omniscience** – He is all knowing. He knows more than us. He knows everything! He knows every being inside and out. He knows our motives, strengths and weaknesses. He knows how hard we are trying. He even knows what is going to happen.
 - 1. His ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts are higher than our thoughts – Isaiah 55:8-9
 - 2. Psalm 139:1-6 – “You have searched me and known me...”
 - 3. Romans 11:33-36, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”
 - 4. THIS is why we must be careful, when we think we know better than Him. Consider Isaiah 40:13-14, Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding? Isaiah 40:26, He knows the stars by name...

iii. **Omnipresence** –

- 1. Psalm 139:7-12 – David notes that there is nowhere we can hide from Him.

2. Jeremiah 23:23-24, "Am I a God near at hand," says the Lord, "And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?" says the Lord; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord.
 3. Hebrews 4:12-13 notes that His word is living and powerful,... no creature hidden from His sight.
 4. Man, pursuing his own ways, thinks he can hide from God. **He cannot.** You may hide from man or act in secret, but realize that God knows what you are doing and where you are doing it.
- iv. **Omnipotence** - God is holy in power –
1. Isa. 40:12-13 – consider the "measurements of God" – waters in His hand (the deepest ocean is more than 36000 feet deep – nearly 7 miles, with an average depth of about 2 miles. God holds it in His hand
 - Measures the heaven with a span – how large is the universe?
 - Calculated the dust in a measure – how many granules of sand are there? God knows!
 - Weighed the mountains in scales – He knows their weight.
 - Who can tell Him what to do? Who can challenge Him? How dare man question God!!!
 2. Mark 10:27 tells us that with God all things are possible (Jesus explaining how God can put a camel through the eye of a needle).
 3. The very expression "Almighty" speaks of His awesome power. (Genesis 28:3, Job 31:2, 2 Corinthians 6:18)
 4. His power is manifest in salvation – Zephaniah 3:17, "*The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.*"
 5. Romans 1:4, Jesus is *declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* God demonstrated His great power in Jesus, both in His life and in His resurrection.
 6. Consider His creation – God spoke and the world came into existence – Hebrews 11:3. We will address this tonight as we consider Genesis 1.
- v. **Immutability** – an expression that means He does not change –
1. Malachi 3:6, "I am the LORD, I do not change"
 2. 1 Samuel 15:29, *And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.*" Spoken to Saul as the LORD rejected him as king
 3. Hebrews 6:17-18 speaks of the immutability of the counsel of God in which it is impossible for Him to lie. The writer's point, God keeps His word.
 4. We can have confidence in God because we know that He keeps His word. He has proven it over and over, which is why we need the Bible.
- vi. **His righteousness** –
1. He is a moral and just God. He does what is right and what is best.
 2. Isaiah 5:16 – He shall be hallowed in righteousness.
 3. Psalm 119:142 – His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.
 4. 1 John 1:5-6 – in Him is no darkness in Him at all. Having noted this earlier, here we observe because He is righteous, He will not dwell in or tolerate darkness.
 5. Romans 1:32, 2:5 – one day God is going to judge this world in righteousness (and in many cases He already has). 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 notes that it is a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked.
 6. This is why, if we choose to live a life in rebellion against Him, or even simply live without giving Him any thought (the way many suppose they are good enough), we ought to be fearful. There IS a day of righteous judgment coming!
- vii. **Sovereignty** –

1. Sovereign means that He has absolute authority. This is so because He is God, and because of all the qualities we have addressed thus far. He can do as He will and without impunity. If He created this world, He has the right AND might to determine its path and what is best.
 2. This is a description often associated with kingship. Thus, any passage that speaks of Him as LORD God is a reminder of His sovereignty.
 3. Psalm 135:6 notes, "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth..."
 4. Isaiah 46:10 notes *Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*
 5. Revelation 4:11, as He is praised and worshipped, they said, "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."
 6. Because of His sovereignty, we ought to be careful before we question Him and challenge Him. When we approach Him, it ought to be "with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28-29)
- viii. In all of these qualities, we can see WHY God is holy and to be regarded as Holy.
- d. **His name is holy** –
- i. Leviticus 22:32 – *You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you.*
 - ii. Psalm 111:9 – *He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name.*
 - iii. Exodus 20:7 – *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.* (3rd commandment) Leviticus 19:12 elaborated on this by noting they were not to swear falsely, nor to profane His name.
 - iv. Jews were so concerned about the name of God that there were (and are) rules in place for writing and pronouncing His name.¹ For example: Once the name of God is written, it is NOT to be erased or defaced. And when pronouncing His name, they often substitute something lest they mispronounce it. This is done out of reverence for Him. Deuteronomy 12:3-5 is a text used to explain this – while they were to destroy the idols of the land and their names, vs. 4 notes they were not to worship God with such things. There are 4 consonant letters associated with God's (primary) name (YHVH). What vowels belong in the pronunciation is not known for certain anymore. But some ancient texts would place the vowels for the word Adonai UNDER YHVH to remind readers to be reverent with His name. A later 16th century German scribe combined the 2 names and from it was born the name, Jehovah. POINT: Jews were serious about respecting God's name – it is AS Holy as He is!
 - v. 1 Chron 16:35 – speaks of giving thanks to His holy name. (Psalm 97:12 – Give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.) Some 23 times in OT, the expression "holy name" is found, always attributed to God.
 - vi. Leviticus 24:10-23 – a man was stoned to death for blaspheming the name of the LORD.
 - vii. **NOTE: We have a big issue today with irreverence. Nothing ought to cause you cringe more than when that profanity is directed toward God's name.** AND, we ought to consider this with euphemisms as well (substitutions for profane names).
- e. **His place is holy** –
- i. Wherever God is, His place is holy. Just His presence ought to make it holy.
 - ii. Isaiah 57:15 – He inhabits eternity, and His name is Holy.
 - iii. Psalm 2:6, "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." A messianic prophecy.
 - iv. Psalm 3:4, He heard me from His holy hill. Psalm 15:1* - who may dwell in Your holy hill?

¹ [The Name of God \(jewishvirtuallibrary.org\)](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

- v. Habakkuk 2:20, *“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*
- vi. Do we think about with the church? While we understand that the building is not sacred, we MUST never forget that when we come together, we are coming into the presence of God and Jesus.
 1. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, we are “the temple of God”.
 2. Every act of worship is directed toward Him – Colossians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, Hebrews 4:16, we may boldly come before His throne of grace (in prayer), etc.
 3. We worship God and Jesus, who is NOW in the presence of God - Hebrews 10:19-22 – He has entered in the presence of God
 4. When we come together, God is holy and deserves the best that we can give Him – that is clearly part of worshipping Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24)

And thus we can see the holiness of God in His character. Everything about Him – who He is, where He is, and what He does – it all declares His holiness. In our next lesson we will continue to pursue this by noting His interaction with people as recorded in scripture and how that manifests His holiness. But for today, let us consider who He is and serve Him with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28). Is He holy to you?

II. Communion with God

- a. We have addressed the nature of God and noted SOME of the qualities that demonstrate WHY He is holy (likely, I could add more). To further illustrate His holiness, let us consider some examples of man as He interacted with God.
- b. God of light – the glory of God.
 - i. In previous studies we have addressed light and darkness. In scripture, light is typically associated with God and good – His holiness. Darkness is usually associated with evil and unholiness, especially when they are contrasted (cf. John 3:19-21)
 - ii. As with everything about God, He is pure light. 1 John 1:5 – He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. James 1:17 describes Him as the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 1 Timothy 6:16 speaking of Jesus “dwelling in unapproachable light”
 - iii. Revelation 22:5, no night in heaven because the Lord God gives light, etc.
 - iv. In many encounters of people with God, we see brightness and glory.
 - v. Exodus 24:16-17, 40:34-35 – over the tabernacle, Moses was not able enter.
 - vi. Numbers 14:21 – all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, 1 Kings 8:11 at the dedication of Solomon’s temple (2 Chronicles 7:1-3 3x),
 - vii. Luke 2:9 – shepherds in the fields, - the “*glory of the Lord shone around them*”
 - viii. 2 Corinthians 3:18 – we all with unveiled face beholding ... the glory of the Lord
- c. Those who had been in His presence realized how serious that was –
 - i. Exodus 3:5 – as Moses approaches the burning bush, – “*Take off your sandals, for the place where you stand is holy ground.*” As noted previously, this is the 1st usage of the word “holy” in the Bible.
 - ii. Exodus 33:18-23 – as Moses prepares to meet with the LORD on Mt. Sinai the second time (after he broke the tablets), he requests, “Show me Your glory.” The LORD does this for Moses (Exodus 34:5-9). NOTE: When Moses comes down from Mt. Sinai, his face is shining so brightly that he had to put a veil over it when speaking to the people (34:29-35). This would continue as Moses interacted with the people. When he went in to the presence of the LORD, he would remove his veil, but when he came out and spoke to the people, he would put on the veil. That is HOW powerful being in the presence of God was (is).
 - iii. Joshua 5:13-15 – as Israel prepares to conquer Jericho, the Commander of the Army of the LORD appears to Joshua. When he realizes it, he falls on his face to the earth and worships. Like Moses, he was instructed to take off his sandals because it was a holy place.
 - iv. Judges 6:22-23 – Gideon sees the Angel of the LORD and is fearful of death because he had seen the angel of the LORD face to face. Exactly who the Angel of the LORD is we do not know, but he clearly represents YHWH. NOTE the reverence of the event. Gideon immediately builds an altar there and calls it, “The LORD is Peace” (YHWH shalom)
 - v. Judges 13, Manoah and his wife – the parents of Samson. Israel is again in trouble because of sinful rebellion against God. The angel of the LORD appeared to them announcing they would have a son and gave them specific instructions (he was to be a Nazarite) (6, 17, 20) – Judges 13:15-23 describes how the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of a burn offering. They feared (rightly so) because they had been in God’s presence. Then they followed His instructions.
 - vi. Isaiah – Isaiah 6:5. Isaiah 6 records the calling of Isaiah. He sees (whether in a dream, vision or actually). He sees the LORD sitting on His throne (vs. 1) and the train of His robe filled the temple. Angels hovered above crying, “Holy, holy, holy...” and the house is filled with smoke. Isaiah fears because he knows he is unclean and in an unclean land. One of the seraphim touches his tongue with a hot coal and makes him clean. He becomes the LORD’s prophet to a condemned Israel.

- vii. Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 10 also record glorious visions of a man of God. The descriptions are “awesome”.
- viii. They are similar to the vision John has in Revelation (Revelation 1:9-20)
- d. I cannot approach Him unless I am holy –
 - i. Psalm 24:3-4, who can dwell in His presence – clean hands and pure hearts.
 - ii. Exodus 29:37 – the altar was most holy. Therefore, priests were required to make atonement for themselves for 7 days to be able to offer The call for sanctification to be in His presence.
 - iii. Matthew 5:8 – the pure in heart, they shall see God.
- e. The seriousness of approaching God –
 - i. Aaron and Miriam – rebuked by the LORD for criticizing Moses
 - ii. The 10 spies judged immediately and strongly for their rebellion and lack of faith.
 - iii. Nadab and Abihu burned to death on the spot.
 - iv. Moses striking the rock – Numbers 20:12 – because Moses did not demonstrate the holiness of God in the wilderness, he would not enter into Canaan.
 - v. It was Israel’s failure to reverence God that caused Him to punish them and eventually remove them from His presence..

May this give us greater appreciation of Hebrews 12:28-29.