

Holy, Holy, Holy

Introduction: In 1 Peter 1:15-16 we are called to be holy as God is holy. If we hope to dwell with God, we must pursue holiness. While we may be able to see that holiness is important, I want to consider why we are called to be holy, what holiness means, and why this is so important in the life of a Christian.

I. Understanding Holiness:

A. Defining holiness:

1. The word translated holy is used roughly 233 times in the New Testament.
2. I think we are aware that the word holy means to be set apart, but I want to dig deeper.
 - a. Thayer defines the word as reverend, worthy of veneration (describing God), and for men 'set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His.'
 - b. BDAG defines it as being dedicated or consecrated to the service of God.
 - c. I feel a toilet brush serves as a good illustration of this.
3. The word saint in the New Testament is the word holy. Consider Romans 1:7 'called as saints' (holy ones). (NIV- called to be His holy people).
4. Holiness, meaning set apart, speaks to our separation from the world and the ungodly ways of the world. This separation does not mean isolation, but is a call for us to be distinct so we can represent God's presence before the world.

B. Understanding holiness:

1. The book of Leviticus is a place that teaches us what holiness looks like and how we might be holy before God. We tend to read this book with a sigh of relief that it has nothing to do with me, but it shouldn't be that way. God has preserved these instructions for us for a purpose. God never instructs except that He is teaching us. If we truly want to be holy, we should carefully study the book of Leviticus to understand what true holiness is.
2. We see a lot of discussion in the book of Leviticus between clean and unclean. Many times, one could become unclean through no fault of their own. What God was teaching Israel through these instructions is separation from the world. They were different from the nations around them.
3. God also wanted their society to be so saturated with clean and unclean that when they see filth they see sin. This would bring a very hands-on concept of the ugliness of sin.
4. The theme of the book of Leviticus could be found in 19:2. We find this repeated by Peter in 1 Peter 1. 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'
5. Throughout the 19th chapter we find several instructions, followed by the declaration, 'I am the Lord your God.' This ought to impress upon us the fact that holiness is the lesson behind all of these instructions.
 - a. Consider verse 19. Is God really concerned with planting corn and beans together? Is God really concerned about a garment having both cotton and wool? Obviously the instruction was given, but it was intended to teach Israel that they are not to mix with the people of the world.
 - b. A few verses later (28-29), the instructions are given regarding shaving the edges of the beard or tattooing themselves. While we might find that to be a bit excessive, God is making a point. The surrounding context is dealing idolatry. The point that God is making is the shaving the edges of the beard and the tattooing of oneself was associated with the pagan idolatry.
 - c. Israel needed to see that by shaving the edges of their beards, and tattooing themselves made them to look like the nations around them. They would eventually go from looking like the world to acting like the world. They could go from trimming the edges of their beards to defiling themselves with sexual immorality.
 - d. This is an important point for us to remember. When we try to look like the world around us, it is only a matter of time before we start to act like them. Is it any wonder we are called to not be conformed to the world but transformed? Romans 12:21
 - e. God wanted Israel to be separate from the world around them. He called them to be holy because He is holy.

II. The Holiness of God:

A. God is Holy and this is the preeminent description of God given in the Old Testament.

1. The first time the word holy is used in the Bible is Exodus 3:5. Moses is told that the ground he is standing on is holy ground.
2. Consider the description of God found in Isaiah 6:
 - a. The Seraphim call out to each other 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'
 - b. The book of Isaiah seems to place great emphasis upon the holiness of God as He is referred to as the Holy One of Israel about 26 times throughout the book.
3. We must appreciate the fact that God being holy means that He is unable to have fellowship with that which is unholy: Habakkuk 1:13, Isaiah 59:1-2

B. What Does God's Holiness Mean For Me?

1. When we appreciate the holiness of God, we will recognize our own unworthiness: cf. Isaiah 6:5
2. In addition to recognizing our unworthiness, we will never approach God in a flippant or casual manner:
 - a. The sin of Nadab and Abihu was a failure to regard the holiness of God: Leviticus 10:1-3
 - b. Paul spoke of the depravity that results when people fail to honor God: Romans 1:20ff, 3:10ff
 - c. Paul quotes in Romans 3 from Psalm 36:1-4
3. When I have a proper fear of God, I will pursue holiness so I can dwell with Him: Hebrews 12:14
4. The problem that God's holiness presents is He desires fellowship with His creation. His holiness prevents Him from having fellowship with the unholy. God cannot make Himself less holy, so we must become more holy if we hope to dwell with the Lord: 2 Corinthians 7:1
5. This fear of God means that I will not allow myself to become defiled by that which is unholy. I will live a life that will bring honor to the Lord. I will live a life that is morally pure.

III. God's Will for You, Your Holiness:

A. God's will for mankind is to be holy so they can dwell with Him: 1 Peter 1:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 4:3

1. The priests in the Old covenant would purify/cleanse themselves before entering the Holy Place. This serves as an illustration of holiness.
2. This ought to impress upon us the importance of holiness if we hope to see the Lord.

B. Holiness is about reflecting the image of God in the life that we live:

1. Those who belong to Christ are going to be holy so they can be useful for the master: 2 Timothy 2:19-21
2. Both Joseph and Daniel serve as great examples of men who were determined not to allow the image of God to be tarnished: Genesis 39, Daniel 1

C. Holiness is not about doing holy things. It is about being holy in our hearts and minds. 2 Timothy 3:5

1. Paul describes some who have a form of godliness but deny its power. They appear holy because they do holy things, but they are not holy.
2. We want to be holy. I think we see the importance of holiness, but we often find ourselves unwilling to do what we need to do to be holy. We don't want to stop doing things, going places, spending time with the people that hinder us from being as holy as we ought to be. Will we make the effort to be holy as God is holy?
3. Do you want to be made well? John 5 'We do what we want to do'
4. 'The holy life is that of the person who wants, above all, to have a right relationship with God and is willing to subtract from their thoughts or deeds anything that is inconsistent with that purpose.'

Conclusion: Romans 1:7 states that God has called us as holy ones. How are you doing with that? We must recognize the supreme holiness of God and pursue holiness so we can dwell with Him. If there is anything that is unholy in our lives, cast it from you so you can be holy as God is holy. Let us perfect holiness in the fear of God.