

**Pastor Paul Bawden**  
**Grace Evangelical Church**  
**Sunday, December 13, 2009**  
**"God – Holy"**  
**Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; I Peter 1:15-16**

**"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts (armies). The whole earth is full of His glory." Isaiah 6:3.**

These famous words recorded by the prophet Isaiah around 740 B.C. are what Isaiah saw in a vision in the temple of the biblical God as given to him by the angelic beings, seraphim.

Uzziah the king of Judah had died. But the living eternal biblical God was very much alive and He had a ministry for Isaiah, who has been called the "prince of the prophets" or the "evangelical prophet" because he is the prophet who has more prophecies concerning the coming Christ than the other prophets.

Regardless of what was happening in the unholy lives of the people of Judah, the biblical God had not lost His holiness.

When Isaiah realized the holiness of the biblical God his response was, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

What does the text mean when it says that the biblical God is holy? What does it mean for us that the biblical God is holy? Let's see if we can find some answers to these questions today.

## **I. The meaning of the word holy.**

### **1. Old Testament**

**Main word for holy in the Old Testament is: "qadosh" or "qodesh."**

It has the idea of being set apart, an object set apart, separation or separate.

Leviticus 11:44 – "You shall be holy (set apart) (God speaking to Israel), for I (God) am holy (set apart)"

Leviticus 19:2 – "You shall be holy (set apart) (God speaking to Israel), for I (God) am holy (set apart)."

### **Referring to the Priests garments.**

Exodus 28:2,4 – You shall make holy garments for Aaron (the High Priest).

Exodus 39:30 – The plate on the front of the holy crown of the High Priest read, "HOLY TO THE LORD."

Leviticus 6:26 – The outer court of the tabernacle was called "a holy place."

### **The tabernacle.**

Leviticus 16:2 – The holy place – the Holy of Holies inside the veil, where the High Priest went once a year to offer atonement for the sins of the people and his sins, as he sprinkled blood on the east side of the mercy seat and in front of mercy seat seven times. He did this twice, with the blood of a bull and the blood of a goat.

### **The Sabbath.**

Leviticus 23:3 – The sabbath was to be a holy convocation.

Read through the book of Leviticus sometime and note the times the word holy is used in that book. I counted some 56 times. God was certainly emphasizing to Israel His holiness that that the nation was to be a holy people. That is just in Leviticus, and the word is used many more times in the Old Testament.

### **The Psalmist uses the word, holy.**

Psalm 29:2 – Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (referring it seems to God's holiness).

Psalm 47:8 – God sits upon the throne of his holiness- his holy throne.

**In the Old Testament, then, the word holy in referring to God, sets Him apart from all others as the standard – true purity.**

**Those who God calls holy are set apart to Him as well, along with garments, a certain place, a day, etc., can be set apart to God.**

**When we come to the New Testament this is the word used for holy.**

## **2. New Testament.**

**The main word in the New Testament for holy is "hagios."**

**The word, holy, also means to be separate from common condition and use. To be set apart, moral purity.**

### **God the Father is holy.**

John 17:11 – Jesus addressed His heavenly Father as holy in His High Priestly prayer.

"I come to you Holy Father, keep them in Your name. . . ."

### **Jesus Christ the Son is holy.**

Hebrews 7:26.

Referring to Jesus, "For it is fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens."

### **The Holy Spirit is holy – just by virtue of His name.**

Acts 5:3, when Peter talk to Ananias about lying concerning how much he had received in selling their property.

"Ananias," Peter spoke to him, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land."

**With God the Father, Holy, the Son, Jesus Christ, Holy, and the Spirit Holy, the Godhead, the Trinity is HOLY!!**

### **Believers in Christ regarding their salvation.**

II Timothy 1:9 – God, "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ from all eternity."

### **Believers in their relationship with the Lord.**

Colossians 3:12 – "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

### **The church, which is those who know Christ as Savior, is called holy.**

Ephesians 2:21 – referring to the church of Jesus Christ.

"In whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. . ."

**The word, holy, in the New Testament like in the Old Testament, is used to describe God and the people of God.**

**The word, holy, in the New Testament has the same idea as the Old Testament, to be set apart, to be separated from, having the idea of purity.**

Let's first then, seek to come up with a definition of holiness in relationship to the biblical God.

Various writers have sought to do so.

### **One writer suggests that the holiness of God**

**Godet (a Swiss Conservative Scholar)** says that "holiness is that attribute in virtue of which Jehovah makes Himself the absolute standard of Himself", In this respect holiness is God's self-affirmation. It decides the law of His existence, inflexible and inviolate. The self-existing I AM is thus equated with holiness.

**Jonathan Edwards**, had this to say about the holiness of God, "The holiness of His nature is the cause and reason of holy determination... the foundation of all His will, purpose and decrees". He calls it "the beauty of

God's moral attributes", and asserts that "(no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than it derives its loveliness from this."

**Tozer agrees and says this about the holiness of God.**

**"Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to the standard. He is the STANDARD. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is holy, His attributes are holy; that is whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy."**

**The Holiness of the biblical God is that in His nature He is transcendent moral purity with His purity making all His other attributes pure as well.**

Tozer goes on to say that the English word for "holy" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "halig" or "hal" meaning, "well, or whole."

As the Holy God, the biblical God is vitally concerned about the moral wellness, the holy health of world He has created that has turned against Him in Adam.

The Holy biblical God is transcendent moral purity. He is the ultimate standard for whatever is thought, said and done. Yes HE IS LIGHT!! He is totally set apart, separated from us.

**II. Our need for God's holiness (Isaiah 6:5; Romans 3:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Isaiah 64:6).**

It becomes quickly obvious that when we know what the holiness of God is about, that we in our lives are far from measuring up to God's holiness, His standard of purity – Who is without sin, never sins, living a life of perfection at all times.

That's why Isaiah when he was introduced to the holiness of God as we commented on briefly at the beginning of our message cried out,

**"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts (armies)." (Isaiah 6:5).**

What's happening here??

**1. When we understand the holiness of God we understand who God is.**

He is totally separated from us in His transcendent moral purity. He is truly the unchanging standard for life in thought, word, and deed.

**2. When we understand the holiness of God we understand who we are.**

We realize that God's Word is true that we all have sinned and we fall far short of God's standard of transcendent moral purity (Romans 3:23). We understand that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked - desperately sick (Jeremiah 17:9). We realize that all our so-called good works and righteousness is like a filthy stinking garment (Isaiah 64:6).

What keeps us from coming to that conclusion in our lives, even as followers of Christ sometimes?"

**One word? PRIDE**

The idea that I can determine my own destiny, which really means that I am my own god. Or one thinks that a little of the biblical God and good works can be mixed together. Or all roads lead to heaven anyway so one can believe what one wants.

But me needing to bow before some Holy God, and admit that I need His help? That is not for me. I can figure life out on my own.

**PRIDE – causes anyone to keep from admitting one needs the help of the holy biblical God.**

**PRIDE** – is what causes us who follow the Lord to not obey Him at times and do our own thing in thought, attitude, and action.

That's why the writer of Proverbs in chapter 6:16 –19 when presenting the seven things that God hates that the first abomination before God is "Haughty eyes." **PRIDE**

Why was Satan ejected from heaven? **PRIDE**

That's why Romans 3:18 says that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." **PRIDE**

What kept Paul from becoming a follower of the LORD? **PRIDE**. Read his pedigree – Philippians 3:4-6.

**3. When we understand who we are – unholy before God, we then can see our need of the Holy God.** That's what happened to Job and to Isaiah. That's what happened to apostle Paul before His conversion.

**III. The Holy God reaches out to unholy humanity (Luke 1:30-35; Hebrews 7:25-26).**

**1. Incarnation - The Holy God so loves the world that He sent His Holy Son into the world (Luke 1:30-35).**

**The Incarnation.** The eternal Son taking upon Himself sinless humanity. The amazing miracle of the eternal Son of God being conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit, so that the Son of God could take upon Himself sinless humanity to be the Savior of the world. But notice that He is called the "HOLY CHILD." He was the perfect sinless child, the Son of God.

- ∞ **Christ was Holy when conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit.**
- ∞ **Christ was Holy in His birth.**
- ∞ **Christ was Holy in His Life – Hebrews 7:25 – Holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners. Thusly He could fulfill the law of God in all its points. I Peter adds referring to Christ, "Who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (2:22).**

**But that wasn't sufficient for salvation.**

**2. Salvation - The Holy Christ must be obedient unto His Father and be Holy in His death (Hebrews 7:27).**

He offered Himself once for the sins of all, for all the unholy people. Yes, and He was made sin for us who knew no sin. The Holy Jesus took our place on Calvary's cross, became unholy for us that there might be available for us the opportunity to experience the holiness of God.

That's why I Peter 3:18 tells us that "For Christ also died for sin once for all, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. . . ."

The Only HOLY ONE, Jesus Christ, became UNHOLY for us who are UNHOLY, that He might bring us to God.

**That means to bring us to the very person and presence of the HOLY GOD.** We who are unholy are brought by the Holy Christ, who becomes unholy for us in His death, to pay the penalty for our sin which is death, into a relationship with the HOLY GOD.

**QUESTION:** How can unholy people have a relationship with the HOLY GOD???

**III. Unholy people can have fellowship with the Holy God.**

**1. Faith in Christ (Romans 3:22-23).**

**"Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."**

Faith in Christ is admitting that one has sinned against God, one is unholy, and sees that Christ paid the penalty for one's sin, which is death, by dying on the cross in his or her place, and then asks Christ into one's life for His forgiveness and eternal life.

## **2. God responds to that faith in Christ.**

**Romans – 3:24 - With redemption** – The penalty of sin has been paid. One is delivered from the slave market of sin and transferred into God's eternal kingdom never having to return.

**Romans 3:24 – With justification** – God declares the believer righteous – all the righteousness of Christ is put on his or her spiritual ledger, while forgiving all of our sin. God is just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus.

**Romans 3:25 – With propitiation** – God is satisfied. His justice and holiness are satisfied.

But then God does something else for the believer in Jesus Christ among other things. But note Hebrews 10:10.

**Hebrews 10:10 reads, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."**

What does that mean? When we accept Christ as personal Savior, God sanctifies us through Christ's redemption for us and His justifying us.

The word, **sanctified**, is from the root word, **HOLY**. It means to be set apart to God as His possession. It's tense means that the **ACTION** has happened, but the results are continuing.

**When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth his first letter, he told them right up from in chapter 1 verse 2 – To the church, which was having all kinds of problems with party spirits and immorality problems, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints (same root word as holy) – really holy ones, by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours."**

### **What's the teaching here?**

Unholy people who accept Christ as Savior are declared sanctified, set apart to God as His possession, His property, yes saints, holy ones before God.

Yes believers are brought into fellowship, an eternal relationship with the **HOLY GOD**. It's every believer in Christ's position to be called a saint, to have the awesome privilege to have God in his or her life and have moment by moment access to the presence of the Holy God.

This is what Isaiah discovered. He came into the presence of the **HOLY God**. He was overwhelmed with His own sinfulness. Did God condemn Isaiah? Not at all. God let one of the seraphim come with a hot coal from the altar with tongs and touched his lips, telling Him that his iniquity was taken away. (Note that the angel had to use tongs for the hot coal - salvation wasn't for angels. The Holy God's forgiveness is for humans, that is why when the hot coal touched Isaiah's lips, forgiveness and God's grace were experienced by Him. God's holiness in His love and grace always provides the believer mercy and eternal life).

**God was telling Isaiah that His presence is not one of condemnation for the believer in Him, but His presence is a place of cleansing. It is not a place of hurt, it is a place of healing. It is not a place for cutting but a place for curing. It is not a place for unforgiveness, but a place of forgiveness. God's holiness provides grace for the believer in the Lord. God's holiness is a consuming fire, bringing judgment on the unbeliever.**

**God is in the business of making unholy people holy before Him so that they can have an eternal relationship with HIM. Indeed as Paul told the Corinthians later in I Corinthians 6:19 – they were**

temples of the HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy God lived in them, and it's the same for us today who know the Lord as personal Savior.

Then there is the practical outworking of this wonderful position of being sanctified, set apart to God as His property, His possession - yes of being called saints, God's holy Ones.

#### **IV. Holy people are to live holy lives for their Holy God in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Peter put it this way as He quoted Leviticus 11:44 & 19:2; 20:7 in I Peter 1:15-16:

" Be holy also in your behavior." Then he quotes from the Leviticus passages because it is written, "You shall be holy for I am holy."

Note that the text, as Tozer points out, doesn't say be **HOLY AS I AM HOLY**. None of us will be holy as God is holy or we would be God. We are to be holy for God is HOLY.

But through faith in Christ, we are sanctified, given the position of being God's property, called holy ones, and in the power of the Holy Spirit we can live lives that portray that we belong to God and are enjoying serving Him each day.

This is actually living out our position as believers of being sanctified – Living in the results of that position. This is what Paul was telling the Corinthian believers who had been sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ, but now as he writes his letter to them, the apostle Paul is telling them that they need to grow up and act holy, act mature in Christ, in their daily lives for the Lord.

What's involved then in living a holy life in the power of the HOLY Spirit?

#### **1. There are some things that a saint of the HOLY God wouldn't do.**

Romans 12:9 says to abhor (detest – hate continually) that which is evil.

The HOLY GOD wants His Saints to have such a love for Him in His holiness that such a love for God will cause one to have a real sensitive heart to not be involved in that which tears God down and demeans HOLY person.

Look at Romans 14:9; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:25-5:6).

God is interested in our moral health – He gives us instruction so our lives can be kept healthy morally and other ways as well.

- ∞ That includes not being involved in idolatry, not letting God be first in one's life.
- ∞ No taking the LORD's name in vain.
- ∞ No dishonoring one's father and mother.
- ∞ No murdering – even having the attitude in one's heart.
- ∞ No pre-marital relationships.
- ∞ No committing of adultery – or even having lust in one's heart
- ∞ No stealing.
- ∞ No bearing false witness.
- ∞ No coveting.
- ∞ No envying.
- ∞ No drunkenness.

#### **2. There are many things that a saint of the HOLY God will want to do.**

Romans 12:9 continues: "Cling to that which is good" That which is part of the will of God for you, which is what good means. Cling is a present participle so one is to adhere, be united with, associated with that which is good at all times. What's involved in clinging to that which is good?

- ∞ A saint will want to put the HOLY God first in his or her life (Matthew 22:37). He will seek to love the LORD his God with all his heart, soul and mind.
- ∞ A saint will be a person of prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- ∞ A saint will be a person of worship – worship will be a life style for Him. Whatever he does will be all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

- ∞ A saint will love God's word and take time to read it and study it (II Timothy 2:15).
- ∞ A saint will love to get together with other saints in the assembly (Hebrews 10:23-25).
- ∞ A saint will always be available to be a witness for His Lord as He gives opportunity (Acts 1:8).
- ∞ A saint will guard his mind from thoughts and attitudes from that which is not holy. If he entertains those thoughts, he asks God's forgiveness and seeks to think on that which pleases the Lord (Philippians 4:8). He will look to the Lord for discernment in all things.
- ∞ A saint will seek to build people up rather than tear someone down (Ephesians 4:29). In other words a saint of the HOLY God will seek to be positive. Sometimes there has to be constructive criticism, but he seeks to administer grace to people.
- ∞ A saint will have a lasting commitment to the family relationship of husband, wife, and children (Ephesians 5:18ff).
- ∞ A saint will have a heart for helping others in need (Romans 13:13). Read sometime Romans 13:9-21 sometime. The holy life for the HOLY God is certainly depicted there beautifully.
- ∞ A saint will enjoy giving financially to the LORD's Church and His work (II Corinthians 9:7).
- ∞ A saint will seek to keep a balance between God's Holiness and God's grace. Sometime one can live by the letter of the Law and the life of the saint is a duty. We are to live HOLY lives in the power of the Holy Spirit in the Spirit of the Law of Christ (II Corinthians 3:17). We uphold the teaching of God's Word with grace. Majors on the majors not majors on the minors.

Finally, and many more areas could be added.

- ∞ A saint has a passion for the HOLY God and a daily passion to serve Him with all the strength God gives.

Of course, when we as saints of the Holy God sin, act unholy, He is right there ready to forgive us as we confess our sin to Him, and then right there ready to continue to use us. We don't sin that grace may abound. In that process, we never lose our position as saints of the Holy God. Rather we seek to please the Holy God in the power of the Holy Spirit, but when we do sin God is there to provide us His forgiveness when we confess our sin to Him.

Let's return to Isaiah again. After the HOLY God ministered His grace and cleansing to Isaiah, what was Isaiah's response to God's call for whom should He send, who would go for Us?

**HERE AM I SEND ME!!**

Did Isaiah have an easy time serving the Lord as His prophet? No. He ended up, tradition has it, eventually being a martyr for his faith in the LORD.

But His passion for the HOLY GOD is something for all of us to emulate.

**HERE AM I SEND ME!!**

**Being in the presence of the Holy God caused Isaiah to be HIS faithful passionate servant.**

**May our being in the presence of the HOLY GOD cause us to have that same passion to serve Him faithfully with JOY!**

**Let's all be available to Him this week so others will know that we have been with JESUS, the HOLY ONE. Let's enjoy being the HOLY SAINTS of the HOLY GOD!!**

Many, however, regard holiness as the expression of relationship. Of Goodness Ernest Neville says that it "is not an entity - a thing. It is a law determining the relation between things; relations", he adds, "which have to be realized by free-wills."<sup>2</sup> Thus holiness in God is His fixed determination to maintain intact the relationship or the

[p.4]

order which ought to reign among all beings that exist and to preserve intact His own position relative to free beings. This, too, finds support from Old Testament usage. Initially what was set apart for God's service was regarded as holy, and so the fact of belonging to God constituted a person or a thing holy. It was relationship to God that constituted Israel a holy people. It was, in the highest sense, expressive of the Covenant relationship. But that very fact itself presupposed the holiness of God. Not only was God holy in that He claimed the exclusive ownership of the entire nation, but Israel was holy to Jehovah as His covenanting people. But this scarcely gives holiness an ethical content. Its meaning as God-devoted does not touch the inner significance of the word.

For this reason, holiness is regarded by many as a moral attribute of God, having the sense, positively, of purity, and, negatively, of complete freedom from sin. It is thus a general term for the moral excellence of God, and His freedom from all moral limitations in His moral perfection, or as Habakkuk called Him: "of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon sin" (Habakkuk i. 13) - a declaration expressive of the moral sensitiveness of God, shrinking from all evil and sin.

Though this view is a definite advance in our understanding of holiness, it is, nevertheless, more negative than positive. Part of the difficulty in definition lies in the difficulty of defining perfection. If it be replied that anything is perfect when it is in all respects as it ought to be, then it merely poses the question: What ought God to be?

Godet tells us that "holiness is that attribute in virtue of which Jehovah makes Himself the absolute standard of Himself", In this respect holiness is God's self-affirmation. It decides the law of His existence, inflexible and inviolate. The self-existing I AM is thus equated with holiness.

Bengel, however, brings us further along the road of definition when he asserts that holiness is "the whole complex of that which we are wont to look at and represent singly in the individual attributes of God" Thus Bengel looked upon holiness as

the Divine nature in which all the attributes are contained, and other writers agree with him by calling it "an attribute of attributes". Thus the old Scottish writer, John Howe, says: "It is a transcendental attribute that runs through the rest and casts a glory upon every one of them"; and again, "it is an attribute of attributes and so it is the very lustre and glory of His other perfections".<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, in typical strain, puts [p.5]

it thus: "The holiness of His nature is the cause and reason of holy determination... the foundation of all His will, purpose and decrees". He calls it "the beauty of God's moral attributes", and asserts that "(no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than it derives its loveliness from this)".<sup>4</sup>

This will suffice to indicate the difficulty encountered by the best minds of the church in attempting to define the holiness of God. Our survey has led us to the place where we must define holiness as more than a mere attribute of God, and accept it as the sum of all His attributes, the outshining of all that God is. It means that as the sun's rays, containing all the colours of the spectrum, come together in the sun's shining and blend into light, so all the attributes of God come together in His self-manifestation and blend into holiness. This is, over all, the Biblical presentation of God. To conceive of His being and character as merely a synthesis of abstract perfections is to deprive God of all reality. In the God of the Bible these perfections live: they function, operate, burn, in holiness! Our God is a consuming fire!