

SHORT COURSE #1: THE HOLINESS OF GOD, 3 pgs

Respond to the question, *Are you saved?*

It's not specific enough in that it fails to identify the reason salvation is necessary. Saved from what?

What two concepts must one understand in order for God's judgment of sin and the pouring out of God's wrath at the death of Christ to make sense? The holiness of God and the sinfulness of man

The primary meaning of the word holy as applied to God in the Bible is separate, on a different plane (out of our league), transcendent (exceeding usual limits), in a class all by Himself.

How is the primary meaning first drawn out in the Bible?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen.1:1-27)

By showing His supreme and absolute **uniqueness** as creator in contrast to all else (creation).

What was the result? *The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims His handiwork (Ps.19:1) and the whole earth is filled with His glory (Isa.6:3b).*

The **connotation** of the word holy and its derivatives in the Bible is moral and ethical purity, excellence. (see **Heb.12:14; 1 Pt.1:15-16**)

[see The Church before the Watching World by Francis Schaeffer, appendix, *Holiness and Love*]

God alone is HOLY in the absolute sense of being supreme in His transcendence and excellence. He is **perfect** in essence (self existent, eternal, unchanging, etc.); nature (knowledge, power, wisdom, etc.); and character (righteous, good, etc.). [Perfection is not equitable with the idea of limits.]

Look up the following passages, note the context and write your observations and comments. Notice the kinds of words that are associated with and used to describe God's holiness.

Ex.15:11 is from the song of Moses. God had shown the gods of the Egyptians to be false and Pharaoh to be powerless to stop Him from taking the Hebrews for Himself. Now He destroys the entire Egyptian military in the red sea as He delivers His people. *Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? is a rhetorical question extolling God's transcendent nature as seen in His awesome power and works. In the greatness of Your majesty, You overthrew Your adversaries (v.7).*

Compare and explain **Rev.15:3-4**.

The song of Moses where God pictured redemption and judgment is analogous to the Lamb's victory song. *Great and amazing are Your deeds, O Lord God almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O king of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord and glorify your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed.*

Comment on the following passages that refer to different aspects of God's holiness.

What do they have in common? All pose rhetorical questions. **Dt.3:24**, *What god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such mighty acts as Yours?* - Moses remembering the past 40 years of God's deliverance and provision, pleading with God to enter the land

Ps.71:19, *Your righteousness, O God, reaches the highest heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like You?* - reflections and prayer of an old man (David?) on his troubled life and God's righteousness in What He has wrought

Mic.7:18, *Who is a god like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgressions for the remnant of His inheritance? He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in steadfast love.* – God is longsuffering toward Israel.

*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor [beauty] of holiness. (**Ps.29:2**) Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him all the earth. (**Ps.96:9**)*

Comment on the following passages. What do they have in common?

They exalt Christ by ascribing to Him different aspects of God's holiness.

Jn.1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn.4:9 - Jesus is described as *only, only begotten, one and only* [translation of a single Greek word] son of God, meaning unique, only one of his kind.

1Tim.6:15b-16 - *our Lord Jesus Christ...who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*

Notice how attempts to express the exalted holiness of God stretch beyond the limits of language. It is obvious that human language is insufficient to do so.

What title containing the word holy is applied to God in the Old Testament? *The Holy One of God* (**2 Ki.19:22**) - Isaiah's prophecy against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, when he mocked the God of Israel

What title containing the word holy is applied to Jesus in the New Testament?

Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God. (**Mk.1:24**) - Jesus casts out an unclean spirit [God's] Holy One (**Acts 2:27**) - quoting **Ps.16:10**

We have believed, and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God. (**Jn.6:69**) - Peter's declaration when many disciples turned back

Following upon **Jn.1:1-3**, *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth* (**Jn.1:14**).

Speaks of the absolute uniqueness of Jesus and similarity to the Father.

What are the expressions of sovereignty in **Isa.6:1**? *The Lord [sovereign]. Sitting upon an exalted throne [absolute authority]. The train of His robe filled the temple [beyond all earthly authority]*.

Comment on **v.3**. *Holy, holy, holy [superlative degree] is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.* Holy to the superlative degree, commanding an angelic army. The verification of His supremacy, knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, etc., is evident throughout the planet.

In your own words, describe the scene in **v.1-4**.

The exalted grandeur and majesty of the sovereign and transcendent God.

Explain Isaiah's reaction (**v.5**). It is the breakdown of a man who sees the awesome reality of God, *I am undone*. He is exposed as completely unworthy and pronounces utter hopelessness for himself and his nation in their defilement.

What elements are common to **Isa.6:1-4** & **Rev.4**?

A human observer; scene of glory and power; central figure is God, seated on a throne; appearance

not described; surrounded by living creatures, worshipping.

What is decidedly different between **Isa.6:1-7** & **Rev.4**? John is not threatened and disturbed as Isaiah was. *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was and is and is to come. (4:8b, see Rev.5)*

Explain Peter's response in **Lk.5:4-11** at the great catch of fish.

*Depart from me, for I am a **sinful** man, O Lord. (v.8)* - completely unexpected

Explain the disciples' reaction in **Mk.4:35-41** when Jesus calms the storm. *And they were filled with great fear ... who then is this that even the wind and sea obey Him? (v.41)* What did they expect when they woke Him?

Different words referring to wrongdoing in the Scriptures

Iniquity - a general term for unrighteousness, not conforming to what is right, ie. injustice (**Rom.6:19**)

Sin, sinner - to miss the mark, fall short, fail to measure up, goal set by a positive command **Rom. 3:23**

trespass, trespasser - to take a false step and so blunder from the correct path of uprightness and truth (**Rom.5:16-17; Col.2:13**)

transgress, transgression -

to pass over the line drawn by a negative command, break law (**2 Pt. 2:16**)

lawless, lawlessness -

people's failure to recognize any law governing their actions (**2 Thes.2:7; 2 Pt.2:7**)

disobey, disobedient - one word means unpersuadable, obstinate rejection of God's will, (**Eph.5:6**); another means refusal to listen to a proper authority (**Rom.5:19**)

offend, offense, offender -

stresses the effect of your trespass upon someone else, you cause them to stumble (**Mt.13:41**)

How can sinners dwell with God in His perfection of holiness? **Acts 26:18**

Paul was sent to the Gentiles *to open their eyes [they have no comprehension of the truth] that they may turn from darkness [ignorance] to the light and from the power of Satan [who has kept the truth from them (2 Cor.4:3-4) and in whose domain they live, Col.1:13-14] to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified in Me [Jesus].* By being sanctified [set apart, made holy] by faith in Jesus

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him, John Piper

Look up the following passages and note the kinds of words that are associated with and used to describe God's holiness: **Rom.11:33-36; 16:27; 1 Pt.4:11b; Rev.5:11-14**

Further Study

Recommended - MP-3 rym200~1, Target Audience by Steve Lawson - The Holiness of God (revised and expanded edition) by R.C. Sproul [or CD Series; cassettes; MP3; <http://www.ligonier.org/>]