
Made in His Image: Holiness

“There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you”

If I am made in the image of God, called to bear his image and conform to the image of Christ, then where do I begin? What should be the first thing that comes to mind when I think about God? His holiness emerges as one of his most important characteristics.

The word holy appears almost seven hundred times in the Bible. In its verb form, sanctify, appears an additional two hundred times. Twenty-nine times Scripture mentions his "holy name". He is called the "Holy One of Israel" twenty-five times in Isaiah alone.

Key Text:

Isaiah 6: ¹In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” ⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” ⁸And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

- 1) We typically define “holy” as purity, righteousness, possessing a pure character, moral excellence (which is not wrong). The word “holy” has a more basic and fundamental meaning in Scripture than purity. Consider the following passages to help form a more complete definition of “holy”.
 - a) Gen. 2:3
 - b) Exod. 3:5
 - c) Exod. 28:2, 4
 - d) Exod. 30:25
 - e) Exod. 40:11
- 2) What is the first thing that Isaiah hears in his vision? Can you think of other examples of repetition in Scripture? What is the significance of repetition in Scripture?
- 3) Seeing God in all his glory and holiness had a great effect on Isaiah and uncovered his true identity. What was Isaiah’s response when encountering the holiness of God? Why is this a correct response?
- 4) What was God’s response to Isaiah? Why was this required to be in the presence of God?

5) While it may appear that God is only holy (incommunicable attribute), he consistently calls his people to be holy. Consider the following OT passages:

- a) Lev. 11:44-45
- b) Lev. 19:2
- c) Lev. 20:7
- d) Lev. 20:26

Consider the NT passages of God calling his people to holiness:

- a) Heb. 10:10
- b) 1 Thess. 4:3, 7
- c) Heb. 12:14
- d) Rom. 12:1-2

Key Text:

1 Pt. 1:¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. ²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for, “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1 Pt. 2:⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

- 6) What was Peter's response to the “Holy and Righteous One” in Luke 5:4-11? Compare to Isaiah 6. Was Peter's response appropriate?
- 7) Based on Peter's exhortation in his letters, what are two traits of a person who is holy?
- 8) According to scholars, 1st century Christians really stuck out in Greco-Roman pagan society because of four things: integrity, sympathy, chastity, and generosity. And because they were different, unique, unlike the society surrounding them, it had a powerful impact on the spread of the Gospel. Read through the letters of Peter. He gives us practical application on living lives dedicated to holiness. How can we be holy as God is holy?