

THEOLOGY PROPER (58)

Communicable Attribute #3- Holiness.

This the attribute that means God and perfectly separated from all evil and sin in everything He does and in everything He is. This attribute means that God is always absolutely and perfectly pure. This attribute is what God is internally, and what God demonstrates and does externally.

Ryrie states: "In respect to God, holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil but also that He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others" (p.38)

The basic meaning of the word "holy" is to be set apart or separated. When referring to the attribute of God, it means He is completely set apart and separated from all other existence's in His purity and from any form of evil.

The Bible is very clear to teach that, when it comes to God's holiness, "there is no one holy like the LORD." (I Sam.2:2) Holiness, although expected in the life of a believer, cannot ever be at the level of God's holiness. In fact, it is this very reality that put Jesus Christ on the cross, for no one could ever measure up to the holiness level of God. We have all sinned against the holiness of God and it is this very fact that demands salvation.

There are many who view this holiness as God's "foremost" attribute, "because holiness pervades all other attributes of God and is consistent with all He is and does." (Enns, p.193). In fact, Henry Thiessen writes: "Holiness occupies the foremost rank among the attributes of God." (Thiessen, p.129) However, when we approach any attribute, we must always keep in mind that all are equally important for all attributes are qualities that make God, God. Certainly the attribute of holiness would be involved in all that God does and is, but so is the attribute of Omniscience and Omnipresence. As Berkhof Observed: "It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another...". (Berkhof, p.73). However, it will be admitted that the Bible does emphasize that the holiness of God is an extremely important part character, As Berkhof writes: "...but if this were permissible(make one attribute more central than another) the Scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection." (Ibid., p.73)

When thinking in terms of holiness, there are several ways it may be categorized:

(Holiness Category #1)- God's Majestic Holiness- this is the holiness of God in which he is absolutely separate from and unapproachable in His holiness. God is so majestically holy that no one can even begin to approach Him, Several passages state or imply this: Ex.3:5; Ex.15:11*; I Sam.2:2; Job 15:15-16; Ps.99:9; 111:9; Is.57:15a; Rev.15:4.

(Holiness Category #2)- God's Ethical Holiness- this is the holiness of God that emphasizes that God is completely separated and set apart from all moral sin and evil. **The ethical holiness of God emphasizes His purity, rather than His majesty.**

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There are many passages which stress this point concerning the holiness of God: Job.34:10; Hab.1:12-13a; I John1:5.

(Holiness Category #3)- God's Judicial Holiness- this is the part of God's holiness that demands a penalty and payment for sin and provides a legal and judicial means of salvation for the sinner. Terms such as "righteousness", "redemption", "propitiation", "justification", are terms that are definitely connected to the judicial side of God's holiness: Rom.3:23-26.

This judicial side of God's holiness will be the reason for God's judgment. That judgment as far as heaven and hell are concerned will either be salvation or condemnation. For the believer the judgment will be reward or loss of reward. The standard and basis for judgment will be the holiness of God.

(Holiness Category #4)- God's Relational Holiness- this is the part of holiness that may be imparted to other beings. It is this element of holiness that enables God to command His people to be holy (Lev.11:44; I Pet.1:15-16).

There will always be, as Thiessen said, "...a chasm between God and the sinner." (p.129) No being, whether human or angelic, will ever begin to approach the majestic level holiness. In fact, even when the most godly have faced God's majestic holiness, they have always recognized this very reality (i.e. Is.6:3-5). However, it is expected that God's people will demonstrate a practical holiness that stems from the Holy God. **It is the admission of a lack of holiness that is critical to salvation and it is the practice of holiness that is critical to reward.** Henry Thiessen appropriately states: "Right views of the holiness of God lead to right views of sin." (p.129)

The mention of God's holiness occurs many more times in the O.T. than in the N.T.. There is no question that once we get to the N.T., God's Holiness is clearly connected to Jesus Christ (i.e. Rom.1:4). Because God's Holiness is such a critical attribute, we cite several references that refer to it;

- 1) Ex.3:5 – Even the best of God's servants cannot approach God's holiness.
- 2) Ex.15:11 – No one is equal to God's majestic Holiness.
- 3) Ex.19:12,13,21-25 – God, in His holiness, is totally set apart from sinful man.
- 4) Ex.26:33 – God's holiness is so unique it has its own sacred place.
- 5) Lev.11:44-45 – God demands His people be set apart in holiness in every area even diet.
- 6) Lev.19:2 – God demands a type of His holiness exist in his people.
- 7) Josh.24:19 – God's holiness cannot ever overlook man's sinfulness.
- 8) I Sam.2:2 – No one is Holy like God is holy.
- 9) I Sam.6:20 – No one is able to match God's holiness.
- 10) I Kings 6:16 – God's property is to contain a most holy place of worship.
- 11) Job 34:10 – God is holy and cannot ever do any wickedness.
- 12) Job 42:5-6 – God's holiness should bring man to humble response.
- 13) Ps.11:4-6 – God's throne is holy.

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- 14) Ps.22:3 – God is holy when He is silent to His people.
- 15) Ps.47:8 – God’s throne and God’s reign are holy.
- 16) Ps.99:9 – God is holy and exalted by holy worship.
- 17) Ps.111:9 – God’s holiness is at an awesome level.
- 18) Is.6:3 - High ranking angels recognize the unique level of God's holiness.
- 19) Is.40:23-25 - God’s sovereign work is carried out in unequaled holiness.
- 20) Is.57:15 - God is highly exalted in holiness.
- 21) Ez.39:7 - God desires to make His holiness seen in His people and will not allow His holy name to be profaned forever.
- 22) Hos.11:9 - God's holiness will not permit Him to abandon His people.
- 23) Hab.1:12-13 - God’s holiness will not permit Him to abandon His people or bless wickedness.
- 24) Lk.5:8 - Peter recognizes the holiness of Christ.
- 25) Jn.17:11 - Christ, God’s Holy Son, recognizes the holiness of the Father,
- 26) Acts 3:14 - Christ is identified as having the holiness of God.
- 27) Heb.12:10 - God's people are disciplined to produce God’s holiness.
- 28) I Peter 1:16 - God's people are to be a reflection of God's holiness.
- 29) I Jn.1:5-7 - God is holy and to have fellowship with Him we must also be.
- 30) Rev.4:8 - Highest ranked beings recognize God's unique holiness.
- 31) Rev.6:10 - Those at God's throne recognize God's holiness.
- 32) Rev.15:4 - God is to be revered and feared for His Holiness.

The holiness of God is a critical attribute. It is unique to God and yet in some ways applicable to us. This attribute is meaningful to us in many ways.

1. It should cause us to stand in awe of God's majesty.
2. It should cause us to realize everything God does, whether positive or negative, will always be done out of absolute holiness.
3. It should cause us to realize that it is impossible for any human being to measure up to level of holiness, for "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
4. It should cause us to realize that God’s holiness demands judgment against unholiness. In fact, judgment is due to God’s holiness.
5. It should cause us to realize that God desires a reflection of His holiness in the lives people.
6. It should cause us to realize that God cannot ever do evil, for perfect holiness must, by its very nature, be absolutely free from any evil or any potential of evil.
7. It should cause us to realize that the more we separate ourselves from that which is evil, the closer in our relationship we are to God and the more of God's character may be seen in our lives.