

## Holiness - Supplemental

I Peter 1:16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” NEW INT.

Holiness is not just an idea, then, or a life free from a list of vices we have determined are vices. Holiness is not a religious term as if we can claim to be holy because we are going to church weekly, or giving money to the church or have not said a bad word in over a year. There is no law of holiness.<sup>1</sup> Holiness is the divine person; it is how God acts and thinks and works. As scholarship concluded: *KODESH [holiness] comes to have the meaning of divine, and thus becomes an adjective for God.*<sup>2</sup>

R. C. Sproul admits that he had to—using his term—‘grapple’ with this:

*“As I studied the Old Testament, I was also bothered by the stories about God’s ... killing Uzzah instantly for touching the ark of the covenant, and by other narratives that seemed to reveal a brutal side to the character of God. How could I ever come to love such a God? The one concept, the central idea I kept meeting in Scripture, was the idea that God is holy. The word was foreign to me. I wasn’t sure what it meant. .... Today I am still absorbed with the question of the holiness of God. I am convinced that it is one of the most important ideas that a Christian can ever grapple with. It is basic to our whole understanding of God and of Christianity.”*<sup>3</sup>

Not wanting to spew theology, let me tie this in a bow. There are three things we can say about God because He is holy.

1. God cannot show Himself *other* than He is. God cannot compromise, be compromised or deny the full expression of His holiness and still be God. He cannot be anything other than holy. Whoever God is, He cannot improve on His perfection, decide to reevaluate or redefine the principles—if I can use this term—by which He governs His actions or His dealings with man.
  - When He declared, “I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you”<sup>4</sup> His decision was not based on the circumstance, nor was it based on an isolated or sudden warm feeling that prompted a change of mind and heart. He did what He did because of Who He is: “I am God...The Holy One.”
  - 15 times in 35 verses in Leviticus 19 we read the phrase “I am the Lord” after each instruction in a longer list of instructions. For God these were somehow typologically connected to the future Cross of Christ. God wasn’t pulling rank, instilling fear into the wilderness dwellers by requiring them to do something that gave Him a sense of power and authority over them. No! He was giving His holiness a metaphorical context that would much later translate into the plan of Salvation through His Son. To allow a compromise of His instructions to suffice would be to show Himself to Israel other than He was—something not possible for Him. A familiar story is Moses striking a rock that he should have spoken to in providing drinking water for Israel. It troubled God to be so misrepresented. “But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.’”<sup>5</sup>

1 Galatians 5:23 says of the Fruit of the Spirit: “Against such things there is no law.”

2 Kittell vol I. p. 90

3 R. C. Sproul, R. C.. *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream,IL:Tyndale House Publishers. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. 1998), (Kindle Locations 210-213).

4 Hosea 11:9 NEW INT.

5 Numbers 20:12 NEW INT.

- The one thing His holiness, his person, his heart, his principles could not endure was idolatry. “Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.”<sup>6</sup>
2. God cannot show Himself *less* than who He is. A Divine self-expression must be always nothing less than infinitely wholehearted.
- When Joash, the king of Israel, was instructed by Elisha to symbolize victory over Syria by shooting arrows in the ground, the prophet was deeply disturbed that the king only used three arrows. “You should have struck the ground five or six times;” the prophet scolded, “then you would have defeated Aram [Syria] and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.”<sup>7</sup>
  - Paul made our point for us: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”<sup>8</sup>
  - And in speaking of the grace of God, every believer should know that Jesus’ resurrection made possible ours: “in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>
3. God cannot show Himself *more* than who He is. God will not change. What God did God does.
- “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”<sup>10</sup> This verse is written on many church walls.
  - “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”<sup>11</sup>

---

6 Leviticus 19:4: NEW INT.

7 2 Kings 13:19 NEW INT.

8 Ephesians 3:20 NEW INT.

9 Ephesians 2:7 NEW INT.

10 Hebrews 13:8 NEW INT.

11 Malachi 3:6 NEW INT.