

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 26th Aug 2019)**Read - Isaiah 6:1-8**

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; heaven and earth are full of his glory. v3

Few passages in the Bible convey a sense of the holiness and majesty of God quite the way this one does. As Isaiah experienced this amazing vision he had a deep sense of the awe and wonder of God's almighty presence, but also of his own sinfulness in the presence of God's moral purity.

Holiness, as it is understood in the Bible, has four clear components. The first is a feeling of awe and reverence at the sheer majesty and "otherness" of God – and hence the deep sense of his own unworthiness, that Isaiah felt in God's presence. The second is spiritual power – that God has the power to do things way above human capability. The third is consecration – something that is set apart for special holy use. The fourth is purity – God is morally pure; there is no sin or evil in God. God alone is the sinless One. In a time when moral and spiritual decay were rife in Israel, it was important for Isaiah to see God in his holiness.

This vision of the holiness of God helped to shape Isaiah's understanding of God for the future. The awareness of the greatness and uniqueness of God reaches a climax in Isaiah, beyond anything else in the Old Testament. And out of this vision came a "vision", a call from God, something God needed Isaiah to do for Him.

***Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.***

***Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty;
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity.***

MHB 36, v1.

DAY 2**Read – Exodus 33:12-23**

When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. v22

Someone once asked the question, "Can you see God? Can you look into a searchlight?" The Old Testament often says that no-one can see God and live. He is the utterly holy One. Moses was not allowed to see God, he could only see His back after He had passed by. And yet this amazingly holy God is also known as "Immanuel", God with us. He is not holy in the Greek philosophical sense, that he therefore cannot have contact with this sinful world, or his perfection would be compromised. The God of the Bible is holy, but He has also chosen to be totally involved in this beautiful world He has made. God is holy but He is here, with us, closer to us than breathing. God's holiness is always the holiness of nearness, love, forgiveness and acceptance.

It is in this sense that we must understand the idea of, "Fear of the Lord" (*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Prov 1:7*). "Fear" in this sense means "to have a healthy respect and love for ..." Our attitude to God should always be one of love and deep respect, not cheap familiarity. The fact that Jesus taught us to call God "Abba", which in the Hebrew of that day meant, "Daddy", should never allow us to reduce this to something trite or superficial.

***Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee;
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.***

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,

Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

MHB 36, v2.

DAY 3**Read - Leviticus 11:44-45**

I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy. v45

Holiness implies spiritual power.

All the religions of the world have a sense of holiness in one way or another, a sense of awe concerning the god they worship, and a belief in the power that god has. This can lead to all kinds of wrong attitudes and actions in the worship of that god. Fertility religions thought that if they had sex in the temple it would bless their crops. Some of the religions in Israel's day believed in child-sacrifice as a way of really pressuring their god to grant their requests. Fear and superstition are often a product of these wrong beliefs.

As Christ-followers we believe in the spiritual power of God. God has awesome power. Just think of the awesome power we see in nature or the universe. But that power is never arbitrary or cruel. The power of God is always about healing, redemption, and love. God's power is directed at bringing us closer to Him. That is why the power of God always includes things like forgiveness and grace. *Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Mt 11:29-30.* This is the power of love.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee;

Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see.

***Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee;
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.***

MHB 36, v3.

DAY 4

Read - 1 Peter 1:13-16

But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, "be holy, because I am holy". v16

God called the people of Israel to be holy (set apart, different, unique), just as He is holy. When they entered the Promised Land they had to choose. They could either compromise and adopt the ways of their pagan neighbours, or they could keep themselves separate from the corrupting influence of the sinful religions that they would find there.

This idea of separation is essential to our understanding of holiness. Not separation in the sense of withdrawal from the world and its problems, like and ostrich hiding its head in the sand. Rather, it is separation in the sense of not getting involved in things that will lead us away from the true God; not compromising what we believe is the right way.

More importantly, this idea of separation implies "consecration", something that is set aside for holy use. Our lives should be "set aside" to be used by God for his work, and to make this world a bit more like the Kingdom of God. In this sense, Christ-followers are those whose lives are consecrated to serve. We are not to be "so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly use", we are called to be real and involved positively in the problems of the real world.

Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.

***Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty;
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!***

MHB 36, v4.

DAY 5

Read - Isaiah 1:10-20

Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. v16-17

An important part of holiness is moral purity. God is the totally righteous One. There is no evil or sin in God. He is holy and pure. God can never do anything that is wrong or immoral; that would be completely against His nature. But it is never just a cold, sterile goodness, it is always moral purity filled with love and grace.

God is holy. Therefore, if we want to live in fellowship with God, we too must live morally upright lives. We must live with honesty and integrity. You cannot live an immoral life and claim to be a child of God.

The basic foundation of righteousness is the Ten Commandments. If everyone in the world simply obeyed God's Commandments think what a wonderful difference it would make. It may sound strange, but I have come to believe that the Ten Commandments should actually be regarded as part of God's creation! This earth and morals are not separate things, they are intimately related. God has infused this world with laws which govern both nature and human beings. The only way to live in this world and be happy is if we live in obedience to the laws God has given us.

Praise my soul the King of Heaven,

To his feet thy tribute bring.

***Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven;
Who like thee his praise should sing.***

***Praise him! praise him! praise him! praise him!
Praise the everlasting King. MHB 12, v1***

DAY 6

Read - Colossians 3:1-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. v12

Will you note the huge extent that moral uprightness features in what Paul is saying here about living the Christian life? He speaks about sexual immorality, impurity, greed and lying, but all of the Commandments of God are implied.

You will find this stress on morality and righteousness throughout the Bible. Most of the prophets in the Old Testament spoke out against the immorality and sinfulness of the nation of Israel when they had strayed from God's moral path. Again and again they called the people back to the righteousness of God and to live morally upright lives, according to the laws of God.

This raises the big word "sanctification" which means "being made holy", or, if you like, becoming more Christ-like. The Christian life is essentially a process of God's grace, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, day by day, making us more like Jesus. Becoming holy people so that we can serve God, and do His will in the world.

We slip and fall and fail many times, but God is full of grace, and He makes allowances for the fact that no human being is perfect. God's grace covers our sin, otherwise none of us could walk with Him. But as Paul says, we must not keep sinning so that grace may abound. We must at least be sincerely trying to live moral and holy lives, consecrated to the service of God.

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