



Square Halo Books

Holiness

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The holiness of God is confusing. None of us are truly holy so we don't know what holiness looks like in human form. We mix up goodness and righteousness and purity with holiness but all of them are attributes of God and none of them are identical with holiness.

There are 2 kinds of holiness, human holiness and divine holiness. Let's start with human holiness.

We are called to be holy.

Leviticus 11:45

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

Leviticus 19:2

God says, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.'

1 Peter 1:15-16

"but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

But we don't feel holy. Part of the problem is that we don't understand human holiness. To be holy is to be devoted to God, to have your life set apart and committed to serving the Lord. It is to be dedicated to His honor and glory. If that describes what lives in our hearts then we will increasingly exhibit goodness, righteousness and purity as we more closely live in ways that make us look like Christ.

Now what some people do is take the externals that look like holiness and they try to live that out. They try to be holy in their conduct only. So they are good people, they try to be nice and perhaps they are generally pure. THAT IS NOTHING! It is from the heart that we love God which leads to true devotion. Those who love God from the heart can, like David, fail spectacularly in their sins, yet repent spectacularly and be called holy even as they are never perfect in the externals.

That is human holiness, but human holiness is different than divine holiness. Holiness is the ultimate divine attribute of God. We have two examples of angels proclaiming God's holiness.



Isaiah 6:3

“And they (the angels) were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’”

Revelation 4:8

“Each of the four living creatures (They represent cherubim and seraphim – the angelic host) had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

Isaiah sees the glory of God and the angels call God three times holy and then speak of his glory. John sees the God who is creator and who lives forever and the angels call God three times holy and speak of God's eternity. I believe that this is a taste of what we will see in heaven as the angels proclaim God's holiness three times and then speak of his other attributes like mercy, grace, forgiveness, etc.

But what does it mean that God is holy? He is good, righteous and pure but that is not what it means for God to be holy. He could not be holy without those things but to be holy is to be more than those things.

For God, holiness means being totally divine, totally other and the totality of all perfections. I don't quite know how to describe God's holiness except to say that it is far more than what we think of holiness where we often seem to connect it to doing a good job of following rules. God makes the rules, he is the rules but the rules don't make Him holy. It is not that he does a better job of being obedient! It seems as though if you put all the attributes of God together in all their perfections (love, mercy, kindness, wrath, judgment), \ the Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Spirit in their mutual love (they are devoted to each other which is why the Son was obedient to the cross) and \ His interaction with all He has made, somehow you get a picture, limited by our human failings, of divine holiness.

God is Holy, Holy, Holy, too holy for the angels to say it just once and He is worthy of devotion from our whole heart. For us then, let us have no superficial external that is a make believe holiness. From our hearts let us strive to be set apart in our hearts to our Lord so as to be holy as He is holy.