

God is Holy

Aim: To catch a fresh vision of God, our mighty and glorious Lord.

Our topic for these Study Days is: "The God who is HOLY & LOVE".

In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed: "Now this is eternal life: that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (Jn.17:3)

To know God in a saving way brings LIFE. And to know God increasingly brings LIFE into our spirits & souls.

Knowing God isn't a mere intellectual exercise as if anyone can know God as long as they master the facts about God. Truth about God is spiritual knowledge and is communicated to us through our spirits, not just our souls (minds & emotions) though initially truth engages our minds. cf. I Cor.2:12-13

This means several things:

- 1) That we approach the study of God's Word & truth spiritually, i.e. through the help of His Spirit, not as some mere academic exercise.
- 2) That we need to set our whole hearts on knowing God -- to have a fresh zeal and hunger for this all-important subject. cf. Psalm 63:1
- 3) That we come to God opening up our spirits to receive a fresh revelation of Himself.
- 4) That we believe that God delights to reveal more and more of Himself to those who wait upon Him and through His Word to refresh us and restore our spirits. cf. Psalm 23:3

For this we must give ourselves wholeheartedly to the Spirit of God -- our whole beings & personality: our minds, feelings, will and even our bodies.

We might think -- this isn't as interesting as some topic on a current issue. Or we might think that we have already read books on this subject and read many verses in the Scriptures about it. What else is there to know???

Yet there is always more to learn about God because He is infinite. We will study more truth about God. And there is also always more to experience in our relationship with God. This experiential knowledge -- knowing God as a real Person with whom we can enjoy an intimate relationship -- is the Father's deepest desire. Today & tomorrow God desires to draw us into a closer, more life-giving relationship.

We will be doing a number of different things as set forth on the schedule though God will surprise us with things that we didn't expect or schedule in! These include:

- 1) Bible study (group & personal)
- 2) Discussion & sharing of insights
- 3) Making responses of adoration & praise
- 4) Reading some insightful & thought-provoking materials
- 5) Listening to two messages by godly men

MEANING OF "HOLY"

Derived from word in Semitic languages, e.g. Hebrew -- used almost exclusively in religious or cultic sense, not in a moral or ethical sense.

"Qadosh" from root "qdsh" means "to separate" or "to cut".

Hence derived meaning: that which is holy is separate from or separated from all else; or cut off from.

"Qadosh" denominates that which is intrinsically sacred, or which has been admitted to the sphere of the sacred by divine rite or cultic act. It also connotes that which is distinct from the common or profane. Furthermore, that which is in opposition to it.

In the OT, places, things, days, people were called "holy":

holy days: Sabbath (Gen.2:3; Ex.16:23; 20:8; 31:11-15; Is.58:13-14); Day of Atonement (Ex.30:10; Lev.16)

holy places: Sinai (Ex.19:23); "holy ground" (Ex.3:5); "the holy place" & "the most holy place" (Ex.26:33); heaven (Ex.15:13; Is.63:15)

holy articles: all the articles, furniture etc. used in the Tabernacle & Temple, e.g. the altar (Ex. 29:37; 30:25-29,37; 40:9,10)

holy people: all the people of God (Ex.19:6; 22:31; Deut.26:19); the priests (Ex.28:1ff; Leviticus)

This means that "holy" denotes a religious sphere, article or person that is exclusively set apart for the divinely designated purposes. In other words for example, a holy place is totally forbidden territory or out of bounds for anyone else. It is to be used exclusively and only for the religious purposes for which it has been designated. That which is holy but used for "everyday" or ordinary use is said to be "profaned".

Synonyms: "sacred", "sanctify/sanctification", "dedicated/consecrated", ("devoted")

The Hebrew antonym for "qadosh" is "chol" which meant "accessible", "common", "profane", "loose", "open".

Key words: separate, separated, exclusive, distinct, distinctive, different, totally unique or special, dedicated, consecrated, inaccessible.

Illustration:

The demarcation in the armed forces, e.g. Navy, between the officers and the regular troops. There are the officers' quarters, e.g. the mess or dining hall, that are completely off bounds for the regular troops except if they have a duty to perform in them. These places are like "holy ground", for the exclusive use of the officers. No junior sailor may demand equal rights! cf. democratic ideas & feelings in the West.

The OT root meaning forms the basis for the NT apostles' teaching on holiness and the NT understanding of "hagios" & "koinos". N.B. The NT apostles were all Jewish in background.

The Holiness of God

On the basis of the root meaning of “holy”, to speak about the holiness of God means that we are referring to His being separated from or cut off from all that which is of the world (i.e. that which is unholy), that He is completely inaccessible to all that is unholy (i.e. unapproachable; His inapproachability). In other words, His total otherness.

Key word: transcendent (i.e. God transcends all things); cf. pantheism (God is in all things; all is God and God is all!). God is totally set apart from and separate from His creation.

God’s holiness is NOT so much just one of His attributes but a description of God’s total Person and nature/character. Hence all that which is divine is by definition “holy”:

- Holy love
- Holy wrath
- Holy justice
- Holy compassion
- Holy laws (which He establishes)
- Holy wisdom

In other words, because He is holy, God is totally different and distinctive from all persons or powers when we compare & contrast God’s love with human love etc.

This also implies that God’s love et al are totally untouched by any taint of sin or evil. In all His thoughts, intentions, ways, and words, God is totally different from human thoughts, intentions, ways, and words. He is above and beyond them.

Thus comparing God with all other deities:

<u>GOD is</u>	<u>Other gods are</u>
eternal	of this earth
Creator (Hos. 11:9)	created beings
all-powerful (Is. 52:10)	weak
glorious & majestic (Is. 6:3; 12:6)	grotesque
trustworthy	fickle, arbitrary
pure & perfect	lustful & evil
infinite	finite (created by man & according to man’s ideas)

On the one hand, God’s self-revelation encourages people to trust Him, love Him and worship Him. On the other hand, those who worship and serve other deities are “fools” and become like them, darkened in their minds, full of ignorance, to be destroyed with the demons/gods. Those who set up other gods (whether in the form of an idol of wood or stone or an idol of the mind) are hateful to God. God rejects the worship of all those who worship other gods or idols in any shape or form.

The Bible speaks of God’s holiness, His holy name, God as “the holy One of Israel”, the beauty/splendor of His holiness (Ps. 96:9; 110:3; II Chron. 20:21). It also talks about God’s Holy Spirit, and Jesus as God’s Holy One (cf. Psalm 16:10; 22:3; Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14, 27, 30; Rev. 3:7). cf. I Cor. 1:30.

When the Bible speaks about God’s holiness, it is directly associated or linked with the following divine attributes:

- His righteousness (Is. 5:6 -- “light versus darkness”; cf. Eph. 5:3-14)
- His glory (“glorious/majestic in holiness” Ex. 15:16)
- His power (“holy arm” Is. 52:10; cf. Num. 20:12 -- almost equal to almighty power)
- His greatness (Is. 12:6)
- His jealousy, i.e. jealous for His holy name (Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 39-44; Is. 37:21-23; Lev. 10:3)
- N.B. “zeal” & “jealousy” come from the same Hebrew root
- His wrath (Lev. 19:8; Is. 8:11-15; 10:17)
- His purity

By application, to speak about God’s holiness is to speak about His perfection -- that He is without sin and evil and is untouched by all that is human, this-worldly and hence affected by the effects of man’s sinfulness and rebellion. Furthermore, it implies His hate for all impurity.

His holiness is synonymous with the dreadfulness and awfulness of His presence, His abhorrence of sin.

But His holiness is awesome, beautiful and attractive. While on the one hand, sinful man is repelled by His holiness, nevertheless because He is holy, He seeks to rescue sinful man from their plight and restore them to an enjoyment of His holy Presence. cf. The Holy One of Israel as "Redeemer" & "Saviour"-- Is.41:14; 43:3,14,15; 47:4.

Thus redeemed man, God's holy nation/people may join together in worshipping God and praising His holiness. See Psalm 93; 99:1-3,5.