

In this holiness series we've met God in a burning bush before whose holy presence Moses took off his shoes; and in the tabernacle where Israel confessed their guilt to receive God's pardon; and in the temple where Isaiah is sent to serve the holy God.

God's holiness humbles us (Moses), and heals us (Levites), and honors us (Isaiah).

**'The idea of holiness is so central that it is said of God, "Holy is his name.'** (Luke 1:49)

*'The Bible is more concerned with God's holiness than ours....God's holiness issues to man as love, acts upon sin as grace, and exercises grace through judgment.'* (Forsyth)

Only one attribute of God in Scripture is 'elevated to the third degree' (R. C. Sproul)

**'Holy, Holy, Holy'** (Isaiah 6:3; Rev 4:8). Some denominations teach about holiness as if it is chiefly concerned with what Dallas Willard calls 'sin management...*the Christian message is thought to be essentially concerned only with how to deal with sin...and its effects.*' (Therefore 'don't dance, drink, play cards or go to the cinema!') Holiness does mean being set apart from the world opposed to God. It is about avoiding sin! We're called to '*put off our old self which is corrupted by deceitful desires...[and] put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*' (Eph 4:23-24)

Paul does call believers to stop lying, stealing, swearing or grieving the Spirit! (4:22-31)

**We don't define holiness by our response to sin! Holiness is defined by who God is!**

God was holy before there was sin to avoid and pure before there was sin to pardon.

**A. Holiness means wholeness.** That 'God is holy' means he is the fullness of true life.

The holy God is completely complete. Holiness is not one aspect of God's character.

It is all of God in his glorious unity. **'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy'**

means we're to be **separate, different and distinct!** **B. Holiness means being human.**

When Jesus said, **'Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect (teleioi)'** (Matthew 5:48)

he invites us to a **'mature and full grown'** (1 Cor 14:20) **'complete / entire'** (James 1:4) life.

**Our motivation to be holy is not monastic legalism, but the vision of our holy God.**

Holiness grows as we dwell on God's holiness and as his Holy Spirit dwells in our life:

as we ***'contemplate the Lord's glory we are being transformed into his image with***

***ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.'*** (2 Corinthians 3:18)

This vision of our holy God is clearly revealed to us clearly in the book of Revelation.

Revelation was written to Christians who lived in a world hostile to Christian faith.

Christians were persecuted for refusing to worship the emperor and they faced the

pervasive cultural seduction *and temptation* to conform to Roman values and vices.

**What motivated believers to persist amidst this pressure is a vision of their holy God.**

*'I looked...there before me was a door standing open in heaven. At once I was in the*

*Spirit and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it...the*

***one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone***

***like an emerald encircled the throne.'*** (4:1-3) There is a **throne!** There are **stones!**

The image of the throne shows us God's **royalty**. The stones show us God's **beauty**. In the ancient world *precious stones were precious because they collect and intensify light*. So our holy God is the Lord of Light. God's holiness is the pure light of his being. Darkness signifies ignorance and sin. God is the source of what is true and beautiful. In a world defaced by sin we worship Jesus **'in the beauty of his holiness.'** (Psalm 29:2) A **rainbow** (4:3) surrounds the throne and signifies God's **mercy**. That is good news, for *'people love darkness instead of light...everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear their deeds will be exposed.'* (John 3:19-20) Humans hate God who requires holiness and rewards faith. It is a fearful thing to oppose God because the holy God is all powerful. *'From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder* (4:5). These images remind us of when God appeared to Moses at Sinai. *'Set limits...Keep your distance!'* God said. (Exodus 19:16; 24). God's law reveals his character and reflects the righteous life which we fall short of.

In front of the throne, **seven lamps** were blazing. These are the **seven spirits** of God.. In front of the throne there was what looked like a **sea of glass**, clear as crystal.' (4:6)

**'The seven blazing lamps [and] the seven spirits of God'** show us God's omniscience. God knows and sees us completely. In his holy presence we are found to be undone. The **'sea of glass'** shows us God's holy purity. In Solomon's Temple there was a brass basin (1 Kings 7:23-26) called 'the Sea' - the largest piece of temple furniture which was before the mercy seat - the place of washing before Israel's priests approached God. *The holy law is a barrier too high to climb and the pure sea too deep for us to cross.* Remember the rainbow! God's holy justice which condemns us now frees us. Mercy!

*God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering..he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the **righteous requirement** of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* (Romans 8:2-4)

*We see God's holy justice and are undone. We see God's Holy One Jesus and are sons.* What is the proper response of God's people to Jesus who makes us holy? Worship!

***Surrounding the throne*** were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white...had crowns of gold on their heads ***In the center, around the throne,*** were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures 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.' (4:4, 6-8)

The whole creation - what is noblest, strongest, wisest and swiftest is seen around the throne - all creatures doing God's will in the worship of our holy, holy, holy God.

***"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*** (Revelation 4:-11)

Will you be there, then? Receive the gift of holy wholeness offered to you in Jesus.