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'The Holiness Of God'

By the late C. D. Cole

"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 5:11).



We are living in a day of mental and moral and spiritual indolence, and therefore, a time of superficial thinking in things relating to God and eternal matters. The Divine attributes have been discarded, even in theological schools, to the junk-heap of dry and uninteresting and unprofitable subjects. The feeling largely prevails that the proper study of mankind is man. In the popular mind the God who does wonders is eclipsed by man whose breath is in his nostrils. This is a restless, nervous, and jittery age, and the very atmosphere seems surcharged with enemies to the quiet, meditative, and studious spirit.

THE FUNDAMENTAL OR BASIC ATTRIBUTE

The holiness of God is the purity and rectitude of His nature. He is necessarily and essentially holy. His very being is the sole source and standard of right; therefore, whatever He wills is ethically right. There is no standard for God; He Himself is the standard of holiness. God is under no law of holiness; He Himself is the law of holiness.

The attribute of holiness gives glory and harmony to all the rest of His attributes. Without holiness, wisdom and knowledge would be but craft and cunning. Without holiness, power would be but tyranny, oppression and cruelty. There is an emphasis given to this attribute

above all the other attributes. There are certain attributes we prefer, because of personal benefit derived from them. We esteem God's love, mercy, and grace before His justice, wrath, and anger. But, in the Bible, the holiness of God has preeminence over all others.

1. No other attribute is spoken of with such solemnity and frequency by the angels. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8).

2. God singles out this perfection to swear by. "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David" (Ps. 89:35). See also Heb. 6:17. Here is a grand argument for the security of the believer. God says in effect, "I will lay My holiness in pawn for your security. If I fail to keep you safe, then I will cease to be holy."

God's holiness is the beauty and glory of His being. He is "glorious in holiness." We also read about the "beauty of holiness." When we take a picture of a man we take the most beautiful part, his face, which is the member of the greatest excellency, and that which distinguishes

his personality. So when God is pictured in the Bible, He is drawn in this attribute as being the most beautiful perfection. Power is His hand; omniscience His eye; mercy His bowels; eternity His duration; and holiness is His beauty. Moral distance from Divine holiness is sin. His holiness is in view when it is said that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In sinning, man was deprived of the glory or holiness of God.

THE HOLY TRINITY

Holiness belongs equally to the three persons of the Godhead. They partake of the same common and undivided nature. The Spirit is usually called the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ addresses the Father under the endearing title of "holy Father". "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). The Lord Jesus is called "the holy One of Israel" more than thirty times in Isaiah alone. The devil himself said to Him, "I know Thee who Thou art, the holy one of God" (Mark 1:24). The Holy Spirit is the Author of holiness in men. Man, in his natural and fallen state, is chaotic morally; his understanding is darkened, and he is spiritually deformed and ugly. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who restores to normalcy; He brings order and beauty out of chaos; He dispels the darkness and diffuses spiritual light by means of the gospel. The saved man is indebted to the blessed Holy Spirit for all the light he has on spiritual things.

MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE HOLINESS

1. The Holiness of God appears in creation. There was not a flaw in creation when it came from His hand. Everything was beautiful and glorious. "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). And again, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Ps. 145:17). So far as is known there are only two kinds of moral beings; angels and man, and these were created morally holy. But sin has marred and defaced God's handiwork, so that nothing is like it was when created except, perchance, the holy angels. Man is ruined and fallen, by nature a child of wrath. And the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting to be delivered from the curse of sin. (Rom. 8:22).

2. God is seen in His holiness as Law-giver. A holy God gave a law that was just and holy and good. Any other standard for His creatures would be inconsistent with His holiness. We are

not commanded to be as wise or powerful as He is, but we are commanded to be as holy as He is holy. (I Peter 1:15).

3. There is a display of Divine holiness in redemption. His holy nature will not allow Him to look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Salvation is not at the expense of His holiness. The Redeemer must bear the wrath due the sinner, for wrath is the exercise of His holiness. God's hatred of sin was as much manifested in redemption as it will be in judgment. The only difference is that in redemption the guilt of the sinner is transferred to the Saviour. The wrath that fell upon the Saviour on Calvary had its source in the holiness of God.

4. God's holiness appears in human conversion. The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24).

5. Holiness will be displayed in the glorification of the believer. When our salvation is consummated we will be restored to the holiness of God. We will not have His power, nor His wisdom, but we will have His holiness. The Psalmist said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). This likeness will be both moral and physical, and the moral likeness to God will be holiness. The believer, while here on earth, struggling against sin, rejoices in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2). Sin is an awful burden to the believer; salvation is the restoration to his original holiness in creation.

6. The holiness of God will appear in all its purity in the day of judgment. Because God is holy, His wrath will be hot. His holy face will be too much for sinners to look upon. They will cry for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16).

EXHORTATIONS TO HOLINESS

The Scriptures abound in exhortation to holiness. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:16). We are exhorted to lift up holy hands in prayer (I Tim. 2:8). We are to follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). And again, "Be ye imitators of God as dear children" (Eph. 5:1). All these exhortations to holiness are addressed to believers, and show that we are not personally holy. We are holy in Christ now; we will be personally holy when we are glorified, for our glorification will be our personal holiness.

It is a principle of universal recognition that all imitation of others is from an intense love and admiration of their persons. And we become like those with whom we associate. The heathen are so wantonly wicked because their gods are

represented as vulgar and vicious. It is said that Plato wanted to have all the poets banished, because in their poems, they dressed the gods in such wicked and vicious garb, thus encouraging the people to commit crime.

TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY

Believers, in the pursuit of holiness, must take time to meditate upon the holiness of God. It takes time to be holy. Sin cannot be banished by a single gesture or an occasional look at the good and beautiful. Meditation upon the holiness of God will develop a spirit of meekness and humility, which in the sight of God is of great price. Comparing ourselves with ourselves may lead to pride and boastfulness, but when we are occupied with thoughts of the holiness of our Saviour, we will be filled with reverence and godly fear. "What torch can be proud of its own light when compared with the light of the sun?"

The temple of Incas at Cuzco, Peru, consisted of three walls, north, south, and west. The eastern side of the structure was open. The walls were smoothly plastered, and overlaid with finely hammered gold. These people were sun-worshippers, and this was the way they worshipped; they would come to the temple just before dawn and stand in the opening to the east, facing the western wall. In front of them on either side was a golden mirror. The sun would rise at their backs, and long before they could see it directly they could see its reflection in the western wall, and be covered with its golden light. Their faces would be illuminated, and their bodies would be literally bathed in light. Now the Gospel covenant is a mirror into which the believer looks with unveiled face at the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ultimately will be entirely conformed to His image. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). Occupation with the holiness of the Lord will change us from one degree of holiness to another degree of holiness.

"Holy God, we praise Thy name!
Lord of all, we bow before Thee;
All on earth Thy scepter claim,
All in heaven above adore Thee;
Infinite Thy vast domain,
Everlasting is Thy reign.

"Hark! the loud celestial hymn,
Angel choirs above are raising;
Cherubim and Seraphim
In unceasing chorus praising,

Fill the heavens with sweet accord;
Holy! holy! holy Lord!

"Holy Father, Holy Son,
Holy Spirit, three we name Thee,
While in essence, only one,
Undivided God, we claim Thee;
And adoring, bend the knee,
While we own the mystery."



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