

Bible teaching on Holiness

1 – HOLY AND HOLINESS – THE WORDS

1. HEBREW (OT)
 - The Hebrew word 'qodesh' conveys the idea of sacredness and 'separateness', on the understanding that God, as creator is of a different kind of being than His creatures.
2. GREEK (NT)
 - The Greek word 'hagios' conveys the idea of 'set apart for God', 'consecrated', 'dedicated', and sometimes moral uprightness or perfection.
3. In translation,
 - The word 'holy' is an adjective, and it describes something, such as 'the Holy Spirit', or 'The holy Temple of God'. There are many references to the word 'holy' in the Bible, probably around 800 in most translations.
 - The word 'holiness' is a noun, being a property or a characteristic which someone possesses

2 – HOLINESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

HOLINESS REVEALED The holy nature of God is revealed for the first time in scripture in Exodus chapter 3 where Moses encounters God as 'holy', when approaching the burning bush. He is warned to remain where he is but come no further (Ex 3:5).

THE HOLINESS OF GOD God is described as holy in one of the most ancient of texts in the Bible, the 'song of Moses in Exodus 15:11 'who is like You, majestic in holiness?', and consequently there are many references to God as 'Holy', especially in the Psalms (22:3, 30:4 etc.).

AWESOME GOD The idea of the 'awesomeness' of God is closely linked with holiness; because God is holy, we hold Him in 'awe' (Isaiah 29:23, Psalm 111:9)

A HOLY PEOPLE - THE COMMAND TO 'BE HOLY' The Old Testament contains the covenant command of God to 'Be holy as I am holy' (Lev 11:44,45) which is part of the 'clean / unclean' laws of the Old Testament. This was designed to instil in God's people a sense of being different and 'separate' from other people because they were chosen. See also Deuteronomy 7:6.

THE HOLINESS CODE This is the common name given to Leviticus 19, which is as fundamental to the Old Testament as the 10 Commandments. It is a description of the moral qualities to which people should aspire in order to be God-like. It contains the famous quote 'you will love your neighbour as yourself – I am the Lord' (Lev 19:18b)

HOLY THINGS The Old Testament describes certain things as holy,

- such as the Temple, because it is the place where God dwells (1 Chronicles 29:3),
- and as a consequence of this, a large number of items used in Temple worship are also prescribed as holy (2 Chronicles 5:5),
- especially the room in which the Ark of the Covenant, the box in which the 10 commandments were kept (2 Chronicles 3:8)

3 – HOLINESS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

HOLINESS – THE IDEA IS CARRIED OVER WITH LITTLE CHANGE The New Testament holds little change for the use of the word Holy.

- Jesus is called 'holy' because He comes from God, and He addressed the Father as 'holy' in the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:).
- Then in the light of the work of Christ, and number of new developments occur which are outlined below:

THE HOLY SPIRIT When Jesus dies and is resurrected, He goes to be with the Father, and His holy presence on earth is replaced by the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit, as John explains carefully to the disciples (John 14:25f.)

- The work of the Holy Spirit begins as we know on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4),
- but continues in the giving of gifts, which are themselves 'holy' gifts of God (1 Cor 12:3)

THE BODY OF CHRIST As soon as Peter began to preach and build on the work of the Spirit on the first day of Pentecost, it was clear that the church, the new 'people of God' were dependent upon the guidance direction and power of God's HOLY Spirit.

- Indeed, Paul was aghast that Christians in Ephesus did not know about the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God which made God's people different from all other, including Jews (Acts 19:2.)
- The whole work and mission of God's people is described as holy (Romans 12:1),
- and also, the Church itself is called 'Holy', just like the old people of God (Ephesians 2:19f.).

HOLINESS AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE We have already seen that the gifts of the Spirit are 'holy'.

- Paul also speaks of the very special nature of the holy calling each individual Christian possesses (2 Tim 1:8,9, Romans 1:3f.).
- The call to holiness is the call to live according to God's ways, and to grow in faith and doing good deeds (2 Cor 6:6, 2 Cor 7:1, Eph 4:23).
- Peter also emphasises that living a holy life is a test of our preparedness for the Lord's coming again (2 Peter 3:10).
- You will notice that Paul speaks of 'perfection' in the 2 Cor. 7 quote, but we are not well advised to equate 'holiness' with 'perfection'. The path of holiness (sometimes called 'sanctification') is the path of Christian life for all.

THE EXPOSING OF EVIL (NOT HOLY) The full exposure of the Holy Spirit on earth is the reason why Satan and demons are exposed in the New Testament whilst they are not as clearly evident in the Old. Paul realises this when contrasting what is 'holy', that is, the things of the Spirit, with what is profane, the things of this world (Gal 5:16f.)

REFERENCES

Exodus 3:4-6 ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Exodus 15:11 ¹¹ "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?"

Leviticus 19:1-4 ¹ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ³ You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. ⁴ Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 11:44-47 ⁴⁴ For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth. ⁴⁵ For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy. ⁴⁶ This is the law pertaining to land animal and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms upon the earth, ⁴⁷ to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

Deuteronomy 7:6 ⁶ For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Psalms 22:1-3 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? ² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. ³ Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

Psalms 30:4-5 ⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Psalms 111:9 ⁹ He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.

1 Chronicles 29:3 ³ Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God:

2 Chronicles 3:8 ⁸ He made the most holy place; its length, corresponding to the width of the house, was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits; he overlaid it with six hundred talents of fine gold.

2 Chronicles 5:5 ⁵ So they brought up the ark, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up.

Isaiah 29:22-24 ²² Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: No longer shall Jacob be ashamed, no longer shall his face grow pale. ²³ For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. ²⁴ And those who err in spirit will come to understanding, and those who grumble will accept instruction.

Matthew 6:9 ⁹ "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

John 14:25-27 ²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate,¹ the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Acts 2:4 ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 4:8 ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,

Acts 19:2 ² He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

Romans 1:3-4 ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit¹ of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Romans 12:1 ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,¹ by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual² worship.

1 Corinthians 12:3 ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 6:6 ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love,

2 Corinthians 7:1 ¹ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

Galatians 5:16-17 ¹⁶ Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.

Ephesians 2:19-22 ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.¹ ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually¹ into a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 4:23-24 ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

2 Timothy 1:8-9 ⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,