

Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

Lesson 7: The Sufficiency of God's Holiness

Every time you study God's word, you are before Him. You enter His **Holy** presence by His Spirit, given at your adoption as His daughter so that you may be holy as He is holy. Jesus has **circumcised** your heart, changing your identity from enemy of God to daughter of God; changing your position from separated from God, to holy unto Him who dwells in you and is with you now and forevermore. Thus, in this lesson, we will worship our Holy God with all our being. *O Holy God, Father, King of Kings, we come to you today, praising you...*

Read and pray Psalm 103. Write down several praises that are meaningful to you today:

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." And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

Deity: Holy¹- God's holiness is His inherent and absolute greatness, in which He is perfectly distinct above everything outside himself and is absolutely morally separate from sin. This definition is centered on the concept of separation, signified by the Greek and Hebrew words for "holy" (Greek: *hosios*, *hagios*; Hebrew: *qadosh*).

There are two aspects of God's holiness found in Scripture:

- **Majestic Holiness:** God is inherently great and resists all compromises of His character and therefore is transcendentally distinct from all His creatures in infinite majesty. He is majestically unique. This sense of God's holiness qualifies all His other attributes, and all these qualify His holiness. In other words, "Holiness is the biblical 'shorthand' for the very essence of God". His majestic holiness is found in both the Testaments:
 - Old Testament: Exodus 15.11; Psalm 71.22, 89.18, 97.10-12; Isaiah 5.16, 54.5, 57.15
 - New Testament: Mark 1.23-24; Luke 1.46-55; John 17; Revelation 15.4
- 1. Choose two scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments to help you understand God's majestic holiness. What did you learn about His majestic holiness?
- **Ethical, Moral Holiness:** Since God is inherently great and therefore transcendentally distinct from everything outside Himself, He is most certainly separate from sin, being morally and ethically perfect, abhorring sin and demanding purity in His moral creatures.
- 2. Choose two scriptures to help you understand God's ethical, moral holiness: Leviticus 20.26, 22.31-32; Job 34.10; Psalm 5.4-5; Isaiah 1.11-17; Ezekiel 39.7; Zechariah 8.16-17; 1 Peter 1.13-19. What did you learn about His ethical, moral holiness?

God's holiness is not independent of His righteousness. To understand the magnitude of Christ's work on the cross, as well as the magnitude of God raising Him from the dead, we must know about His righteousness. God's righteousness is His perfect absolute justice in and toward Himself, His prevention of any violation of the justice of His character, and His revelation of Himself in acts of justice.

A holy and righteous God demands holiness and righteousness of people who would be rightly related to him (Psalm 29.1-2; 1 Peter 1.15-16). God stands in absolute, essential opposition to sin, so He must judge and punish sin. In the salvation of sinners, the holiness and righteousness of God are revealed, because in salvation God effectively judges sin and imputed righteousness to people so that He can accept them as holy without compromising His essential holiness and righteousness.

¹MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine*, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017) ppgs. 60-61, 183-185, 631

Holy Living

One of the richest blessings of God's grace in salvation is that He attaches His name to His people. He graciously pursues the welfare of His people with the same zeal with which He upholds the honor of His reputation, because they bear His name. As children of God, we bear the "family name" of God, and His name is Holy! (1 Chronicles 29.16; Isaiah 57.15; Psalm 33.21; Isaiah 47.4) If he is our Holy Father, our lives ought to resemble His holiness.

3. One of the most stirring examples of someone who looked like her Father is Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1.26-45). As you read her story of obedience to God, note how her mindset and actions reflect her bearing the "family name" of her holy God:

4. How does your mindset and subsequent actions reflect your resemblance to your Father?

Christians have been saved to be holy and to live holy lives (1 Peter 1.14-16). The phrase "to be holy" appears about 2,000 times in Scripture and means "to be set aside for something special". Thus, God is holy in that He sets Himself apart from creation, humanity, and all pagan gods by the fact of His deity and sinlessness. That is why the angels sing of God, "Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6.3; Revelation 4.8), and why scripture declares Him to be holy (Psalm 99.9; Isaiah 43.15).

The idea of holiness takes on a spiritual meaning among the people of God based on the holy character of God. For instance, the high priest of God had inscribed across his headpiece "Holy to the LORD" (Exodus 39.30). The high priest was especially set apart by God to intercede on behalf of a sinful nation to a holy God for the forgiveness of their transgressions.

Holiness embodies the very essence of Christianity. The holy Savior has saved sinners to be a holy people (1 Peter 2.9-10). That is why one of the most common biblical names for a believer is "saint", which simply and wonderfully means "saved and set apart" (Romans 1.7; 1 Corinthians 1.2).

When one considers that a holy God saves, it is not surprising to learn that He gives His Holy Spirit to every believer at salvation. The primary purpose of this gift is to equip believers with the power to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4.7-8; 1 John 3.24, 4.13).

God wants Christians to share his holiness (Hebrews 12.10) and to present themselves as slaves to righteousness, which will result in holiness (Romans 6.19; 2 Corinthians 7.1). Holiness is the core of a Christian's experience (Hebrews 12.14). The authors of the New Testament epistles constantly reminded their readers, and us, that spiritual maturity springs out of holiness (Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 2.2-3; Hebrews 5.12-14).

5. Read Ephesians 4. List all the practices of one who is growing in spiritual maturity:

Scottish theologian John Brown provides this definition of holiness from his *Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of Peter* (1866): "Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills. God's mind and will are to be known from His word; and, so far as I really understand and believe God's word, God's mind becomes my mind, God's will becomes my will, and according to the measure of my faith, I become holy."

6. Write a prayer asking the Lord to equip you with the power to live a holy life, focusing on areas in which you need growth into spiritual maturity (use Ephesians 4, question #5). Include praise for the areas you know His Spirit is progressively growing you into the likeness of your Father.

Joshua 5.7-9: So it was their children, whom He raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

Doctrine: Circumcision~ Established by God through Abraham in Genesis 17.10-11, circumcision is the cutting off of the male foreskin. God initiated this as a sign of God's covenant promises to His people (Genesis 17.1-14). Obedience to circumcision by God's people was an act of consecration, or being declared sacred, for service and obedience to God rather than obedience to pagan gods and living to the pleasures of self and sin. It served as a divine seal on God's chosen people requiring a human response of obedience. Finally, it signified membership in the covenant community of God's people, much the same way baptism signifies membership in God's Church (Colossians 2.12).

Circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament pointed God's people to His promised Messiah whose death would destroy sin's power and pay the debt owed by sinful man in accordance with the law. Thanks be to God for sending His Son, Messiah, whose death canceled our debt, nailing it to the cross, and thus meeting the required legal demands of God's law (Colossians 2.11-14).

7. Use anything you have learned about His holiness, holy living of His daughters, and any scripture provided to explain the role of circumcision before our Holy God. Why does it matter to God? What does it mean for His Church? What does it mean for you?

As we studied in Lesson 6, God moved His people into the Promised Land through the miraculous and spectacular display of His dominion in their crossing the raging flood waters of the Jordan (Joshua 3). Logically the next step to taking possession of the Promised Land would be to immediately wage war against the Amorites in Jericho. But God could not allow His people to enter this Promised Land without first initiating and restoring His people to right relationship with Himself, through the requirements of the covenant. Therefore, unconcerned about the victorious battle He will lead, God focused on His people's relationship with Him exemplified through obedience to His covenant (Genesis 17.1-14).

Just as God required the people to consecrate themselves according to Exodus 19 prior to experiencing the "wonders" the LORD would do on behalf of His people (Joshua 3.5), God requires that His people be consecrated (declared sacred) to God through circumcision (Genesis 17.10-11), prior to His victory over His enemies in Jericho (Joshua 6).

8. What is the purpose of this circumcision in Joshua 5.9?
9. Define "reproach". Use the following scripture to help you define "reproach" in spiritual terms: Psalm 31.11, Nehemiah 1.3, Jeremiah 51.51
10. Who bore your reproach (Isaiah 53.6; Romans 15.3; 1 Peter 2.24)? What is your response?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: Read and pray Psalm 145. How has praying scripture throughout your time before your Holy God and Father grown you in holiness this week? What would be different in your life if you devoted time to doing this throughout next week?

Lecture Outline:

Aim: An accurate vision of God's holiness inspires our pursuit of holiness.

- I. Sign of Circumcision (Joshua 5.7-9) **T1:** A vision of God's holiness is a life-changing experience.
 - a. How could an accurate vision of God's holiness change your life?
 - b. How much time did you spend meditating on His moral, ethical holiness this week? Was it a life-changing experience?
 - c. What could you do to sharpen your vision of God's moral, ethical holiness?
 - d. If you, like Isaiah, stood before the holy, holy, holy God, what sins would be revealed?
- II. Spiritual Circumcision (1 Peter 1.15-16) **T2:** A vision of God's holiness demands a response.
 - a. How might an accurate vision of God's holiness change the way you respond to God?
 - b. How do you understand God's call on your life in light of His majestic holiness?
 - c. In what specific ways will you respond to God's call to be holy?

Boice, James Montgomery, *Joshua*, An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989) pgs. 35-49

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Doriani, Daniel M., *1 Peter*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2014) pgs.36-59

Jackman, David, *Joshua: People of God's Purpose*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014) pgs.41-66