



What We Believe: Solid Doctrine for Everyday Life

The Doctrine of the Holiness of God

Defining **Holy** (Hebrew, *qadowsh*):

- 1) to be cut off, separate, wholly other;
- 2) completely pure.

God's holiness is the very *essence* of who he is. If we were to ask, "How does God reveal his holiness?" the only right answer would be, "In everything he does!" God is Holy in

his justice, mercy, love, power, etc. Everything God thinks, desires, says, and does is utterly and completely holy.

*Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)*

*There is none holy like the LORD:
for there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God. (1 Samuel 2:2)*

*Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is great like our God? (Psalm 77:13)*

To see God face to face was the ancient Israelite's greatest hope and greatest fear. Because God's holiness is both attractive and terrifying. It's the same for us.

How Cynicism Gets in the Way (an aside)

Cynicism: Suspicious of motives. Wants to "see through" so as not to be fooled. Takes a posture of self-protection. Wants to "pull back the curtain" showing that, behind everything, it's all just smoke and mirrors. Suspicious of ulterior, self-serving motives. Cynicism drains the enjoyment out of life.

"There is a shrewdness which, almost with pride, presumes to have special elemental knowledge of the shabby side of existence, that everything finally ends in wretchedness." (Søren Kierkegaard)

"No matter how cynical you get, it's never enough to keep up." (Lily Tomlin)

Cynicism is a universal acid which eventually eats through its own container.

- The Big Three “Masters of Cynicism” who have profoundly shaped the way everyone thinks & feels today: Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche.

The antidote to cynicism is what the Bible calls “the fear of the Lord.”

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding. (Psalm 111:10)*

Isaiah’s Vision of God’s Holiness

1) *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2) Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3) And one called to another and said:*

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

4) *And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5) And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”*

6) *Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7) And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”*

8) *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:1-8)*

Made Fit for God’s Holy Presence by Jesus’ Atonement

Romans 5:6-9 1 Peter 1:18-19 Exodus 12 (Passover)

Discuss and Share:

- 1) Why might we be motivated to downplay God’s holiness?
- 2) What are some of the dangers of doing this, of “domesticating” God? Would we really want to live in a world ruled by a God who is indifferent to sin and injustice?
- 3) Where have you seen cynicism at work in the world? In you?
- 4) How would you encourage another Christian struggling with a fearful, faltering faith?

Sing: *Holy, Holy, Holy!*

Recommended Resources

- The artwork comes from, *Do You Believe?: 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life*, by Paul Tripp (Crossway, 2021), on which this class is loosely based.
- “The Holiness of God,” online essay by Richard Lints, thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-holiness-of-god.
- “Holiness,” short video by The Bible Project, bibleproject.com/explore/video/holiness.