

RESPONDING

T O G O D ' S H O L I N E S S

God's holiness means He is separate from sin. But **holiness** in God also means wholeness. **God's holiness** is His "God-ness." It is His being God in all that it means for Him to be God. To meet God in His **holiness**, therefore, is to be altogether overwhelmed by the discovery that He is God, and not man.

WHAT IS GOD'S HOLINESS?

God's holiness means that He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor. The fact that God is holy means that He is completely set apart from creation. He is completely "other." Likewise, it also means that He is set apart from anything that is not morally perfect.

In Exodus, God calls the tabernacle itself "holy." It was a place set apart exclusively for service to God. In addition, God commanded that there be a veil, "and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy." (Ex. 26:33). This was the place most fully devoted to God, where nothing impure could enter.

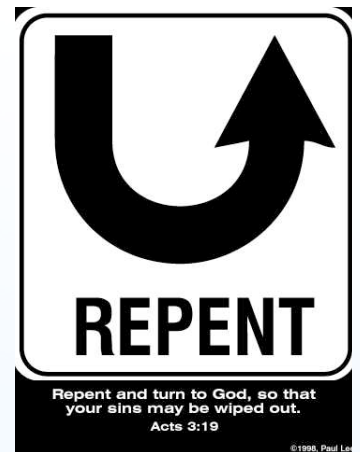
Likewise, God "set apart" a day of the week as holy. "the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Ex. 20:11).

God's perfect holiness brings both feelings of awe and fear. Many people refuse to accept the truth of God's holiness. If men have the tiniest blemish or sin on their account, standing before a holy God would be like a wax figurine standing before a blast furnace.



God's holiness encompasses every other facet of His being. This means that His love...is holy love. His goodness...is holy goodness.

There is nothing about God which is not holy. Therefore, there is absolutely nothing that can approach God and live that is not holy.



Isaiah's Response to God

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah comes face to face with God's holiness. When he is confronted with the power of the holy, Isaiah could only say, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." (6:5). True holiness can only convict and bring our repentance.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S HOLINESS

THE SHOCKING STORY OF UZZAH

God's supreme holiness is nowhere better demonstrated than in the story of Uzzah (1 Chronicles 13)

Read 1 Chron. 13:1-11 before continuing

1. The people wanted to be reconciled

In this passage, David and Israel wanted to be reconciled to God. They wanted to get Israel back together and come back to God. They thought the way to do this was to bring the ark back to the people. (It had been stored for the years Saul hunted David.) Today, all people want God in their lives. They want blessing, healing, and a relationship with the Almighty.

2. The people did not come on God's Terms

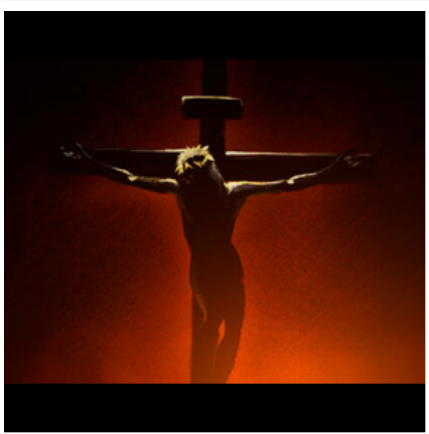
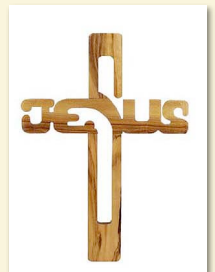
They did what was right in their own eyes. You see, when God commanded the ark to be built he had rings installed on both sides. These rings were so poles could be inserted into each side of the ark and the priests would carry the ark with the poles. God was very, very specific and very emphatic about the fact that the priests were never allowed to touch the ark. Instead of coming to God the way that He commanded, David simply put the ark on "a new cart" (1 Chr. 13:7). They disregarded the holy nature and instruction of God.



3. The People see true Holiness

As the cart transported the ark, the oxen hit a bump and the ark began to fall. Uzzah reached out to steady the ark and keep it from falling in the mud. When he touched it, God killed Him. This seems a bit drastic, but Israel needed to realize that they could not come to God anyway they chose.

God alone defines the way man comes to Him. Uzzah mistakenly thought that his sinful hand was less defiling to the ark than the mud. Today, man thinks he can come to God without dealing with his sin. Just like Uzzah, man disregards the Holiness of God and pays the price.



The place where God's wrath and love met perfectly for the sinner.

What Must We do?

God's holiness is impassable. There is no way around it. Because everything that we are and do is tainted with sin, we do not possess the ability to come into a personal relationship with the perfect God of the universe. However, God knew from all eternity that our state would be completely hopeless.

God the Son took on flesh, was born of a virgin, lived a completely holy life, and died on the cross to satisfy the justice of our Holy God. In the cross of Christ, we see God's perfect wrath and justice coming together with His love and mercy. God loved us so much He poured out all His wrath on His only Son, who had never sinned. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Because of this, the only thing we can do to bring ourselves into relationship with a Holy God is to come broken and repentant, as we trust completely in Christ's sacrifice.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S HOLINESS

OFFERING STRANGE FIRE

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. - Leviticus 10:1-2



Nadab and Abihu were priests. They were sons of Aaron the High Priest. God had personally selected Aaron to be the first High Priest. Together with Moses, Aaron had led the people of Israel through the wilderness. If anyone in Israel had a close relationship with God, it was Moses and Aaron. One might expect a little leeway from God in dealing with the sons of Aaron. There was none.

For one transgression at the altar God reacted swiftly and violently, wiping them out on the spot. It was not as though they profaned the altar with prostitutes or offered human sacrifices as the Moloch cult. All they did was offer some “strange fire” there.

We are not sure exactly what the strange fire was. It sounds as if it was merely a question of young priests doing some creative experimenting with their worship. They should receive punishment, but the death penalty? No trial, immediate execution?

Can you imagine how Aaron felt? After all he had done in serving God, how could God kill his two sons for a stupid mistake? I am sure Aaron ran straight to Moses to demand an answer. With all the fury of a Father who had just lost his children, I can imagine Aaron was inconsolable.

However, notice how Moses replies to Aaron.

*Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be **sanctified** in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. - Leviticus 10:3*

The word translated “sanctified” means “show myself holy.” God’s explanation for the execution of the two priests was, “I will show myself holy to those who approach me.” In Exodus 30:9-10, God had commanded that no outside incense or burnt offering be offered on God’s altar other than what God prescribed. Notice Aaron’s response in Lev. 10:3, he “held his peace.”

When it comes to God’s holiness and God’s law, there is no argument that can be made. There are no mitigating circumstances. There are no “special” exceptions.

God’s perfect holiness is a law unto itself. It is like gravity. A leap from a 12 story building will kill you. It doesn’t matter if you jump, fall, get pushed, or accidentally slip. The law of gravity holds regardless.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S HOLINESS

Is there any hope?



What happens when an immovable object meets an unstoppable force? Because of the Bible's explicit teaching that all mankind is hopelessly dead in transgression and sin, there is no hope that we may every approach the holy God and live.

To stand before God as a "sinner" is to face certain execution. This is bad news, but we must understand it is not God's "badness" that has caused this situation. It is our own. If we are marking the sides of good and evil, God is the good and we are the evil.

Despite all of this, God indeed loves sinners. He sent Jesus (God the Son) to die in the sinner's place, taking the full wrath of a holy God.

Those who trust in Christ are united with Him in His death (Rom. 6:5). This means that, in essence, the believer died with Christ. Likewise, we have also been raised to new life with Him.

This way, and only this way, sinful people can come into the presence of a holy God and call Him Father, instead of judge. Christ satisfies the

Father's holiness and gives us a perfect righteousness in order to stand in God's presence forever.

