

2023

Doctrine of Holiness



ONLY
JESUS

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Jesus Alone

is God

Church of

Europe

DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS

1. *The holiness encounter.*

Leviticus 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.

1Peter 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

The Hebrew word for “holy” is *qāḏôš*. James Strong defines this quality in this manner: “to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate”. The German theologian, Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), used the Latin term *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* to explain the holy encounter with God. He described this as an overwhelming power which is wholly different and other to this world. When confronted with God’s holiness, a human cowers with a sense of holy awe and terror. Jacob is a case in point. On the way to Haran fearing for his life, he encountered God at Bethel. “And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen 28:17). Rudolf Otto went on to state in his book *Das Heilige* (1917), “It is like nothing human or cosmic; confronted with it, man senses his profound nothingness, feels that he is only a creature, or, in the words in which Abraham addressed the Lord, is ‘but dust and ashes’” (Genesis, 18, 27).

To summarize thus far, God is the source of all holiness. Humans cannot know or understand holiness until God manifests himself, as he did at Bethel with Jacob. The holiness experience will leave one thoroughly shaken with awe, reverence and a godly fear. The holy fear of God is not oppressive and exploitative, but instils a sense of profound love, healing and dedication to God. Holiness, hence, in the words of Otto, is a tremendous and fascinating mystery for those who experience the holiness of God. Given the above, it stands to reason that it is difficult to teach holiness because it is an encounter, not an abstract concept, with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob lived with Isaac who in turn lived with Abraham, and yet he did not know what holiness was until he encountered God at Bethel. Peter, James and John were also filled with this awe and dread of holiness when the Lord was transfigured before them on the mountain. “And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid” (Matthew 17:6).

2. *The Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies*

Exodus 26:33 And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.

We can approach the topic of holiness using the model of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. What made the Tabernacle holy was the shekinah presence of God dwelling on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. From there the holiness of God radiated outward towards the rest of the Tabernacle. To put it simply, no presence of God, no holiness! Similarly, when the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in us, our inner man becomes the innermost chamber – the holiest place, if you will, because the Lord now dwells permanently here. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (I Cor 3:16, 17). Hence the Holy of Holies was the ground zero or epicenter of holiness because that was where the glory of God descended and remained. Now we are the mobile Holy of Holies of the Lord Jesus.

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

2Cor 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The High Priest used to bring the blood of animals into the Holy of Holies once a year and apply it on the mercy seat where the glory of God dwelt. This pointed to the time when the Lord Jesus himself would bring his blood into the heavenly places and atone for our sins. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19). Here is the wonderful news: while God is holy and we are sinful, Jesus our High Priest leads us into the Holy of Holies where his blood meets the holiness of God on the mercy seat. Put differently, we have “boldness to enter into the holiest” not by token of anything we have done or can do, for we are sinners, but because God will always accept those who enter into the Holiest place with the blood of Jesus. The Holy of Holies is where the blood of Jesus meets the Spirit of Jesus, and we will be safe, blessed and become holy. “And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (I John 5:8).

3. From the Holy of Holies to the outer court

Exodus 20:26 *Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.*

Holiness began in the Holy of Holies but disseminated throughout the Tabernacle all the way to the outer court. In the same manner, the holiness of the Spirit of Jesus will affect our outer appearance and mannerisms. The water from Ezekiel's futuristic Temple flowed out and healed the nations. In the same vein, the Spirit of Jesus will sanctify everything that pertains to the outer man also. "And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:9). This is why God was concerned with the clothing of the High Priest upon the altar. This is why he has commanded us to maintain a distinction between male and female clothing.

Deut 22:5 *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.*

The outer court was not the main attraction of the Temple, it was the Holy of Holies because God's glory dwelt there. The outer man or woman (i.e., the flesh and the visible) cannot and must not be the main attraction of the Christian life. The High Priest and all of Israel's eyes were on the Holy of Holies. The ultimate aim is to live in the Holy of Holies, but one must pass through the altar (repentance) and the wash basin or laver (baptism in Jesus name) before entering the very presence of God. Put differently, the flesh and its accessories must die on the way. By accessories I mean anything that magnifies or glorifies the flesh. Jewelry is one example, which is why Jacob commanded his family to remove their jewelry and bury it under a tree on the way to the house of God in Bethel. "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem" (Gen 35:4). Note how the Apostle Peter appeals to Christian women invoking the example of holy women of old.

1Pet 3:3 *Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;*

1Pet 3:4 *But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

1Pet 3:5 *For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.*

Other accessories include substance abuse, bad company, pornography or any written, audio, or any visual material that violate the holy commands of God etc. God has not called us to be legalistic as were the Pharisees, but a people who live and are led by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that we have not received the Spirit of fear. Holiness is not accomplished through fear because the Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of love. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:13-15). We are not called to be hypocrites – are you struggling with some sin? Then take it to the Lord in prayer, confess it and wrestle with it until the Lord gives you victory. Holiness is not oppressive, but liberating and beautiful. Repeatedly, David and other psalmists exhorted the people of God to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

***1Chron 16:29** Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*

***Psalms 29:2** Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*

***Psalms 96:9** O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.*

May we have the holy encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ! May we become the Holy of Holies in whom he dwells, and may his Spirit flow outward and conquer, bless and liberate our outer man or woman!