

Sacred and Profane Isaiah 6:1-7

God calls us to be holy – but just what does it mean to be holy? This word seems to have vanished from the minds of many.

So just what does the word “holy” mean, and why should this matter to us in the 21st century? To be holy means to be set apart and devoted to the Lord in holiness and purity. The Lord Himself in **Lev. 20:26** told Israel, ***“You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.”*** God is holy, and He wants His people to live holy lives that show that we belong to Him. Sadly, many of those who claim to be Christians, live unholy lives.

The N.T. uses the word “holy” more than 200 times. It speaks of the Holy Spirit, of Jesus as the Holy One of God, of the holy or sacred Scriptures, holy angels, holy ground, the holy place, holy prophets, and even Christians as a holy nation in **1 Peter 2:9**. To be holy means we are set apart and devoted to God. *Now if you are a Christian, isn't it important for you to be holy and righteous?*

When Isaiah came into the presence of God, he understood what it meant for God to be Holy – ***“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.”*** I wonder, as we stand before the Holy Lord of hosts, if we like Isaiah, see ourselves as people of unclean lips, needing the grace and forgiveness of God. He saw the holiness and purity of God and came to realize the horribleness of sin that had invaded his life. Isaiah understood the difference between being holy and being in sin.

It is sad, but the foundation of reverence for God, for morality, for life, for family, and for truth has disappeared from the hearts of many. We no longer realize some things are bigger and more important than our selves; we have begun to believe that we don't have to give an account of our lives to God on the Last Day. And this loss of the sacred has even infected the church.

Some Christians like to speak about or sing about the awesome nature of God, but they fail to distinguish the sacred from the profane. The Lord God has always distinguished that which is holy from that which is common. One of the ten commandments reads, ***“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain”*** (**Ex. 20:7**). God is holy, and His name is holy. To take God's name in vain means that you failed to take the name of the Lord seriously but treated it as a trivial thing. When people treat the name of God as something trivial, and swear falsely by it, or defile the character and holiness of God they have sinned against Him.

The Lord our God takes it personally when you misuse His name. **Lev. 19:12** says, ***“You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of God; I am the LORD.”*** In ancient times people would make a vow to the Lord hastily and then fail to keep their vows. So, Solomon in **Eccl. 5:4-7** said, ***“When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the***

messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.”

When we approach God to worship Him, we should approach Him with reverence and awe. Worship is not entertainment or trivial. There have been times when I have heard someone say, *“I didn’t get much out of worship today.”* Brethren, worship is not about us; worship is about the glory of God. Worship is an act of love, praise, respect, adoration, and thanksgiving. *When people sincerely worship in spirit and in truth, they glorify God.* When they glorify the God they love, they are themselves blessed by the experience of coming close to God. So, when I hear someone say that they didn’t get much out of worship, I know where the problem lays.

In **Lev. 10:1-2**, Nadab and Abihu failed to worship God appropriately when they offered up strange fire, which the Lord had not commanded, *“And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.”* God is holy, and He wants His people to worship Him in the way He commanded. When people offer up strange worship, worship He did not command, *He is offended.*

Moses had to go to Aaron, the High Priest and father of the two, and say to him, (**Lev. 10:3**) *“This is what the LORD has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’”* Worship is a sacred act, because God is sacred. This is why God told Aaron in **Lev. 10:10**, *“You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean.”* We can’t presume that we can offer any old thing to God, and He’ll be pleased. **Hebrews 12:28-29** says, *“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”* We must worship in spirit and in truth; we must distinguish the holy from the profane.

When we worship our holy God, we must please the One we worship. To call what we do *“worship”* but then to focus on ourselves and what we want must surely appear to God as empty and vain. When the priests in the days of Malachi offered up polluted and blemished offerings at the temple, the Lord felt despised and profaned (**Mal. 1:8-14**). You see, they were entreating the favor of the Lord but not honoring his as a *“great King.”* God demands that his name be *“feared among the nations”* and that his people offer a *“pure offering.”*

When churches ignore Scripture and offer what they wish rather than a *“pure offering,”* they too despise the Lord and fail to honor his name. They blemish the worship when they add unauthorized musical instruments or have women preachers, things never instructed in the N.T. for the church. When people at church imitate performers on a stage, they take the focus off God and put it on the performer. When churches today ignore God and profane His name by presuming to worship as they please, they fail to see God’s attitude: *“I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from you hand”* (**Mal. 1:10**).

The Scriptures also describe what being holy as God’s children *means in our moral lives.* We must set apart ourselves from the lusts of the world. **1 Peter 1:13-16** says, *“Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace*

that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 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.”

People tend to do what they want rather than what they ought to do. They follow their passions rather than their consciences. **1 Jn. 2:15-17** reminds us, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”* Despite what we hear and see daily from the world, *God does have some moral absolutes.* This world is passing away, and also its lusts. When our lusts cause us to love the world, and we do not love the Father as we should. God is not pleased.

God wants a total commitment from us. He wants us to love Him with all our heart and soul. Paul urged the church in Rome, where there was much immorality, to give themselves completely, body, soul and spirit, to the Lord. In **Romans 12:1-2** he said, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* When I give myself as a sacrifice to God, I can no longer live for its lusts and desires.

Living an unholy life is not an option for the Christian who wants to please God and live in His grace. **Hebrews 12:14-16** says, *“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.”* We too can lose the grace and blessing of God if we pursue sinful things and forget God.

Yes, a Christian can lose his salvation, if he returns to a sinful life. **2 Peter 2:20-21** says, *“for if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.”* Right and wrong matters! When people leave God’s teaching and are overcome by sin, they end up worse than before they became a Christian.

Giving in to sin can confuse and mislead us. Sin can cause us to think less of God and then to begin justifying our sins. People can convince themselves that sin is good and living to please God is unnecessary. *Justifying sin can cause us to lose sight of anything godly or holy.* We can lose sight of a pure and righteous God who expects us to be pure and righteous. *We can fix our desires on our pleasures rather than on eternity.* **We can forget that one day we will give an account for how we have lived.**

Romans 2:6-11 says that God “*will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.*”

Until we realize our holy God doesn't compromise his righteousness, we won't understand what it truly means that God is holy. **Habakkuk 1:13** says that God's “*eyes are too pure to approve of evil*”; and He “*cannot look on wickedness with favor.*” **Psalm 5:4** says that *we do not have a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with* Him. *How could we say God is just and righteous, if He does not condemn and punish evil?*

In Psalm 50:16-21, God says to the wicked, “*What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.*” One day God will hold each of us accountable for our attitudes, our words, and our deeds. We will have no doubt about the holiness of God on that day. *Wouldn't it be better to take God seriously now, than to await Judgment Day?*

2 Cor. 6:17-7:1 says, “*Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.*” *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*”

It is time for you to ask, “*How do we become Children of God?*” Any approach to God must include faith – **Hebr. 11:6** says this is the only way to please God, these are the ones He rewards, the ones who seek Him in faith. Then in **Gal. 3:26-27** we read from the apostle Paul, “*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” It is baptism that puts us into Christ and clothes us with Christ. Without Christian baptism, according to Paul, you have not acted in faith and you are not Children of faith. Jesus tells us we must born of water and the Spirit (**Jn. 3:3-7**). Have you believed? Have you repented of your sins? Have you been baptized? What's holding you back? Judgment Day will be too late!