

Holiness

It seems a key feature many believers look for in a church is happiness. While happiness is not always wrong, the key characteristic of God's house is holiness, not happiness.

"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever," Psa. 93:5.

Holiness has to do with being separated from, and not touching what is unclean. The concept of being separated from what is bad is not new to us? We separate from poison, bad food, germs, harmful animals, dirt, and cancer to name a few.

Old Testament Definition and Usage of Holiness

1. One main Hebrew word for "holy" is 'qadowsh'. It basically means sacred and set apart for God's use. Those who would take a Nazarite vow would separate from some normal pleasures so they could be totally dedicated to God; *"All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord"*, Num. 6:8. We have this concept in an everyday sense. A young man might separate from seeing all other girls so he can be married to only one girl.

2. Another similar word for 'holy' is 'qodesh'. It basically means apartness or separateness and is also translated holiness and sanctuary. It too conveys separating from something so God can use it. In the sacrificial system a pig (unclean) could not be used and could stay with its herd. But a firstborn cow (clean) could be used and so was separated from the herd to be put on God's altar for Him. That is what a holy cow was, Num. 18:17. We also have this concept in an everyday sense. We will separate a fish from its water habitat for our dinner – after we clean it.

3. We also get the meaning and purpose of holiness in its usage in Leviticus 11. Holiness was not an intrinsic characteristic but an action in obeying the Lord. God told Israel that certain foods were clean or unclean. To eat something unclean was not holy and would defile (contaminate with uncleanness) one and limit their service unto God – until they became clean again.

Beginning on a simple level, God wanted His people to be able to, *"make a difference between the unclean and the clean,"* Lev. 11: 31-47. God desires a people who know the difference between clean and unclean, and will separate from the unclean so they can be used and near to God: holy!

New Testament and Holiness

The subject of holiness in God's church to many is passé and belongs back in the Old Testament. We now speak of joy. But Peter repeats the Old Testament to the church, *"Because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy,"* Lev. 11:44 / 1Pet. 1:16. Remember the very gift to the believer in Christ's gospel is the *"Holy Ghost"* or *"Holy Spirit"*. But can holiness and joy go together? The fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy, Gal. 5:22.

'Hagios', the main Greek word for holy, is used over 200 times in the NT. Sometimes it's translated 'saints' for all believers indeed are God's holy ones. Holiness has to do

with purification, consecration and sanctification of life. It's being set apart from uncleanness (which has many forms today from the web to the bed) for God's glory.

We read of a *holy* bodily presentation unto the Lord, a *holy* kiss, a *holy* temple (church), *holy* brethren, *holy* hands, a *holy* calling, *holy* Scriptures, a *holy* priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices, a *holy* nation (church) and a *holy* conversation (conduct). (See Rom. 12:1, 16:16, 1Cor. 3:16, 1Ths. 5:27, 1Tim. 2:8, 2Tim. 1:9, 3:15, 1Pet. 2:5, 9, 2Pet. 3:11).

NT Truth Concerning Holiness

1. **Unholy won't see the Lord** – We're not to be deceived for the unclean and defiled will be banned - "*holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,*" Heb. 12:14, Eph. 5:5, Rev. 21:27.
2. **Holiness is now intrinsic** – By being born again of God's Holy Spirit *in* us, we are "*the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,*" Eph. 4:24, 1:4.
3. **Two areas of Holiness** – There is fleshly (moral) wrong that affects and damages us. Also there is spiritual (religious) wrong that defames God's glory. So we are to "*cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,*" 2Cor. 7:1.
4. **Saved to yield to Holiness** – By being linked to God through the living Christ, we are to "*now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness...fruit unto holiness,*" Rom. 6:19-22.
5. **Chastened to produce Holiness** – In love, to help reach His goal for us, the Father has "*chastened...but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*", Heb. 12:10.
6. **Older women an example of Holiness** – Holiness is modeled for the next generation, "*The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness,*" Titus 2:3, 1Tim. 2:15.
7. **Holiness to the end** – Keep going on. "*To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God...our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints,*" 1Ths. 3:13.

Jesus taught defilement (what makes unholy) is now not what goes into the mouth but what comes out of the heart; pride, sexual sin, evil thoughts, deceit, thefts and blasphemies, etc. He said, "*these evil things come from within, and defile the man,*" Mark. 7:23.

Today's emphasis is what goes into the mouth (bottled water, vegan diets, etc.). What the heart produces is generally ignored. The Lord taught what goes in our mouth goes through the body, bypassing the heart. Thus such things are valueless and powerless in changing the heart's defilement in anyway, Mark 7:19. Food is for the body and is to be eaten with thanksgiving (1Tim. 4:3-5) but Christ is for the heart.

Holiness mourns sin. Esau wept when he lost the blessing, not because he had sold his birthright. "Men mourn for the evil that sin brings, not for the sin, which brings the evil." The Lord Jesus Christ is holy, Heb. 7:26. The Father is holy. The Spirit is holy. Twenty four hours a day, creatures in heaven are saying, "*Holy, holy, holy...*" Rev. 4:8. So may we now, "*come out from among them [secular and religious unions with unbelievers], and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the **unclean** thing; and I will receive you,*" 2Cor. 6:17.