

Be Ye Holy, for I am Holy

Text 1st Peter 1:13-16 – Be holy, for I am holy.

Introduction - The concept of holiness is central to the revelation of God to His people in the scriptures. From the writings of the first prophet Moses to the final revelation of John, we are confronted with the Holiness of God and with our corresponding duty to imitate His holiness. The author of Hebrews goes so far as to say that without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Without holiness, we exist in a sort of spiritual stupor, cut off from communion with our God (Matthew 13:10-17)

The Beauty of Holiness - When we undertake this consideration of holiness, we must not let sin become central to our definition or meditations about holiness in such a way that it diverts our attention from the beauty of holiness itself. Holiness is not dependent in any way upon the concept or existence of sin to draw its meaning. The beauty of God's holiness is an amalgamation of his superlative qualities (Psalm 96:1-9; Rev 4:1-8) – glory, greatness, praiseworthiness, fearsomeness, honor, majesty, strength. To be holy as God is holy is to exhibit these same qualities in our lives.

Defining Holiness - From the Old Testament, the most common Hebrew term for holy is qados meaning separateness or apartness; it is the utter otherness of God in relation to all of creation. He is infinitely, utterly and magnificently not like anything in His creation. Isaiah 40:21-25; Deut 4:32-39. There are no other gods, period.

Set apart for worship – Peter's command to be holy as the Lord is holy is a direct quote from Leviticus 11:39-45. The book of Leviticus is about worship and fitness for worship. When Peter is calling us to a God-like holiness, he is reminding us that we are a people set apart and made worthy for the worship of our triune God. We are created for worship and made worthy to do so.

Created in the image of God - We originally made worthy because we were created in His image (Genesis 1:26-28) He has placed His image upon us and forbidden that His image or any other image be used anywhere else in the context of worship. (Exodus 20:1-6). This is why sin is such a blight upon the beauty of holiness; it brings death to the image of God. (Romans 5:12)

Death of the mankind - God's image rendered lifeless like graven images - In the death of mankind, the image of the triune God, placed upon the soul of the human race, had been reduced to the same impotent lifelessness as any other graven image. When death entered the world, the image of God was now open to the same derision, mockery and scorn heaped upon false idols. It was as if God could not create an image worthy for worship any better than man could. Jeremiah 10:1-16. In the fall of man, Satan was really attacking God in his temple by proxy.

Antithesis – Seed of the Woman vs. Seed of the Serpent – The fall of man introduced the history of redemption into the scriptures – a history which would unfold as a great battle between the seed of the woman and the serpent (Gen 3:9). The gospel is declared in a shadow here (God wins through Jesus Christ, Satan is crushed.)

Jesus Christ is the promised seed through whom all nations will be blessed (Genesis 12, Galatians 3) – It is He who will crush the serpent.

Recreated in the image of The Heavenly Man – Having been born of the image of the man of dust (Adam), we now bear the image of the heavenly man 1 Cor 15:40-49. Our worthiness to worship is restored – with incorruptible seed this time. In Jesus Christ alone, by granting faith to us in Christ alone, God has created us again to bear the image of the heavenly man; now born of incorruptible seed, an incorruptible image. And, this has implications as to how we are to live.

Be Holy for I am Holy-back to our opening text from 1st Peter. Conduct yourself with fear, purify yourself with the word. Be good citizens. Lay aside malicious qualities (deceit, hypocrisy, etc). Love one another in the fear of God.