

LESSON 4

“. . . ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory’” (*Isaiah 6:3*).

The Holiness of God

1 Peter 1:15, 16; Revelation 15:3, 4

The text of **1 Peter 1:15, 16** says, “But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” In studying the cross, we face the transcendent holiness of God!

God is holy! We are not to be as holy as God is; this is a burden no one could bear (**Acts 15:10**). God is thrice holy. He is “Holy, Holy, Holy” (**Isaiah 6:3**). He is not just “love, love, love” or “law, law, law.” God is God, and that means that He is holy! We must revere holiness in order to accept or allow for wrath. We cannot appreciate or accept grace until we understand wrath. The question is not “How can a loving God send a sinner to hell?” but “How can a holy God not send a sinner to hell?”

Our first step down comes when we do not see God as He really is. We must not bring God down to be like us. We must lift ourselves up to be like God. Sentimental ideas about God result in foolish talk about God. God, today, is “in”; but the “in” God is not a holy God! People today seek to feel God while refusing to know God and obey God (**John 17:3**).

God, in one sense, does not have attributes. He cannot be sliced up like pie. He is “holy”! Idols are not holy and cannot be holy! God’s name is “Holy” (**Isaiah 57:15**). We need to recognize the “otherness” of God! He does not conform to a standard—He is the ultimate standard. For example, He is an absolute, infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity who is incapable of being anyone other than who He is. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth.

We must live in awe, in wonder of God! People say, “Justice demands that God do this.” No! Nothing and no one can make demands of God! God’s being is unitary. He is not parts working, together but simply One! God is never at cross-purposes with Himself. One attribute is not in conflict with another. He is not a “walking civil war.”

Holiness is the unique characteristic of God that separates Him from His created beings and any alleged gods. This allows God both to withhold His love and to give His love. No wonder the word “holy” is in the Bible more than six hundred times! Only a superior power can compel obedience. In all eternity past, nothing has entered God’s Being, and nothing has been removed.

To reveal Himself, God uses anthropomorphisms, expressing His nature in human attributes. Holiness is the number one attribute and is explained by the others.

God is love (**1 John 4:8, 16**), but love is not God. God defines love; love does not define God. Love cannot make sense apart from holiness. What holiness demands, love provides. If God is only equal to love, then the personality of God is destroyed. If all other attributes are denied except this one (love), then this one attribute becomes a substitute for God. Love is something true about God, but it is not God.

We are to be holy! Holiness must be the business of every human being! Why has holiness fallen upon hard times? Tragically, the human race has orphaned it. Holiness is missing from our sermons, classes, and books! Personal holiness has become obsolete. We do not even promote holiness in regard to Jesus. When was the last time you heard about “The Holiness of Jesus”? Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. The Christian is not ruined by living in the world, but by allowing the world to live in him. Holiness is not only what God gives me, but also it is what I manifest in the life that God has given me. Holiness is a position, a practice, and a process.

People today exchange holiness for cheap, false spirituality. Spirituality can be faked or bragged about; holiness cannot. Can a person be proud of humility? Ironically, those who have great virtues are totally unaware of having them. Humble people deny their humility! In contrast, some people go to great lengths to promote their spirituality. One woman told me, "I am on a higher spiritual level than you are." I gave her two answers: (1) "I hope so," and (2) "How do you know?"

Without holiness, we cannot see God (**Hebrews 12:14**). Our hearts are to be blameless in holiness before God (**1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13**). We are to perfect holiness in the fear of God (**2 Corinthians 7:1**), to be partakers of His holiness (**Hebrews 12:10**).

Six Hours, 2

**Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 15:33-37;
Luke 23:44-46; John 19:28-30**

"Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30).

The Final Three Hours

Six hours! Jesus' final three hours on the cross were clothed in an unnatural darkness. Quietness ruled. The only sounds anyone could hear were the groans of three dying men and the dropping of blood. How creepy was the darkness!

Six hours! In the final three hours, Jesus made four more statements in quick succession. He cried, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" Interpreted, this means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (**Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34**). God allowed Jesus to become sin (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). God and Jesus were separated. How terrifying! Oh, the depth of sin! When Jesus spoke, those near the cross thought that He was crying out for Elijah.

Separation from God was a deeper wound upon the Son of God than any punishment man could inflict. This statement shouts out about the depth of man's fall, his lostness, and his helplessness. Jesus' death not only conquered sin, but it also conquered death (**Hebrews 2:14-18**). Christians no longer need to fear death. Satan is a defeated enemy; sin is a defeated curse. Death has lost its sting (**1 Corinthians 15:21-26, 51-58**).

Jesus, knowing that God's will was being done, allowed Himself to say, "I thirst." The humanity of Christ is seen in this, His sixth statement. Humanity's deepest cry is "I thirst" (**John 19:28, 29**; KJV). Cheap wine was handy. Even when something decent was done for Jesus, it was cheap. The "Water of Life" was thirsty! (**John 6:51-58; Psalm 69:21**). As a man, He said, "I thirst." Jesus was totally identified with humanity. He did not use His divinity to cancel out His humanity.

Crucifixion took away all the rights of one's humanity. Isaiah wrote, "But everyone who saw him was even more horrified because he suffered until he no longer looked human" (**Isaiah 52:14**; CEV). The Jews had looked for the Messiah, but they rejected and crucified Him when He came. What was their hope became their death. Nothing can be more empty than a religion without a Messiah.

God has not changed; He cannot change. Jesus, the Son of God, depicted what God is like from the cross. After being on the cross for six hours, He made the statement only He could make: "It is finished!" (**John 19:30**). "The task is done!" Now, God can be just while justifying sinners. Jesus said these words of finality to let us know how little we know! He was saying that He had completed everything that the Father had sent Him to do for our salvation. It is beyond our grasp! Heaven has to be eternal; it will take us all eternity to begin to comprehend this. In heaven we will not be God (or gods). Heaven will be a learning experience. Being with God, we will further understand His glory. Jesus will be there as "The Lamb" (as depicted in the entire Book of Revelation). All eternity will

declare what Jesus meant by His words “It is finished!”

What man could not finish, Jesus did. The mouth of Satan (the accuser) was shut (**Revelation 12:9–11**). The old law of Moses was nailed to the cross. The new law of Christ came into effect (**Hebrews 8:6–13; 9:12–18; 10:4–14, 18–31**). The greatest mouthful ever said was “It is finished!”

Jesus may have made His last statement on the cross in a loud voice: “‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last” (**Luke 23:46**). Amazing! His crying out took great effort. He wanted all to hear this. Notice that He did not commend to God His body, His breath. He commended His spirit. Jesus, God’s Son, had chosen to die!

Jesus gave His all for our salvation! His followers should live sacrificial lives too. The church is the only institution on earth that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not members of it.

The Glory of the Cross

Six hours! Jesus never talked as much about being crucified as He did about being glorified. “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You”; “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (**John 17:1, 5**). Our God turned the most inhumane instrument of execution into the greatest motivation! The cross is the magnetism of God. Do not talk about the God “within us” or “beside us” until you grasp the God “above us.” God has two thrones—one in the highest heaven and the other in the lowest heart. We do not understand Christ until we understand the cross. The only person worthy of glory gave it all to His Father. Let us not glory in anything but the cross of Christ (**Galatians 6:14**).

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*