

King's Online Bible School
Doctrine 101: Learning about God

16. The Holiness of God (adapted from R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths*)

When we speak of God's holiness, we are accustomed to associating it almost exclusively with the purity and righteousness of God. Surely the idea of holiness contains these virtues, but they are not the primary meaning of holiness.

The biblical word *holy* has two distinct meanings. The primary meaning is "apartness" or "otherness." When we say that God is holy, we call attention to the profound difference between Him and all creatures. It refers to God's transcendent majesty, His august superiority, by virtue of which He is worthy of our honor, reverence, adoration, and worship. He is "other" or different from us in His glory. When the Bible speaks of holy objects or holy people or holy time, it refers to things that have been set apart, consecrated, or made different by the touch of God upon them. The ground where Moses stood near the burning bush was holy ground because God was present there in a special way. It was the nearness of the divine that made the ordinary suddenly extraordinary and the common, uncommon.

The secondary meaning of *holy* refers to God's pure and righteous actions. God does what is right. He never does what is wrong. God always *acts* in a righteous manner because His *nature* is holy. Thus, we can distinguish between the *internal* righteousness of God (His holy nature) and the *external* righteousness of God (His actions).

When we are called to be holy, it does not mean that we share in God's divine majesty, but that we are to be different from our normal fallen sinfulness.

Summary

1. *Holiness* has two distinct meanings: (1) "otherness" or being "set apart" and (2) "pure and righteous actions."
2. We are called to be holy - to reflect God's righteousness and purity.

Biblical passages for reflection:

Exodus 3:1-6 1 Samuel 2:2 Psalm 99:1-9 Isaiah 6:1-13 Revelation 4:1-11