
The Call to Holiness

The Holiness of Christ

Various Passages

Jesus *dismounted*. The Lord went afoot, now, majestic and wrathful, through the Triple Huldah Gate in the southern wall of the Temple, his golden eyes fixed and flaming. The disciples could scarcely keep up with him.

Then Judas saw where Jesus was going. The booths. The hundred shops in the southern portico. The tables, the selling of animals for sacrifice, the money exchange, commerce in the precincts of the Temple.

As he approached the busy marketplace, Jesus twisted three cords into a whip. Then he cried in a piercing voice, "Away! Away!" and began to crack his furious whip over the heads of merchants.

Judas trembled with pleasure. Now it was starting. This was Messiah! Jesus, hurling fire to earth! Jesus, the howl of God, whose voice is a rod of iron: Judgment has come, O you people! For look how the Master flings to the pavement the coins of the money changers! How he tips their tables over! And those who sell sheep and oxen and pigeons— them he drives out of the Temple, crying accusations like a Zealot: "Away with these things! Away! It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves! Away!"

All these things took place on the first day of the week, the Sunday before the Feast of Passover. On that day Judas said in his soul, This is he whose coming is a refiner's fire— and who shall endure it now? Who shall be standing when this week is done?

All the way back to Bethany, Judas wiped tears from his eyes and sighed with excitement.

But that was the last time he felt such joy. That was the last time Judas Iscariot was glad, for the rest of his life."¹

III The Holiness of Christ

A. Introduction

B. Identical With the Father's

C. In the New Testament

D. As Christ's Character

Introduction: Once again I want to recap what we've seen over the last two weeks. First, we are holy. This means we are separated and sanctified to God's service. Which means we are called holy and called to holiness.

"... 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." (1 Peter 1:15–16 ESV).

Second, to live out this holiness we must depend on the Holy Spirit to empower us to do so.

Third, this walk isn't passive. That is there is work on our part. And the primary aspect of that work is to grow closer in both knowledge of and fellowship with God. And last week we touched on exactly what that means. We learned that ...

¹ Wangerin Jr., Walter; *The Book of God Zondervan* Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 570

God's holiness is a foundational aspect of His character, which by his very nature He can't compromise. We saw that when we speak of God's holiness, we are first speaking of His "awefulness," His majesty.

Second are also addressing God's holiness as both His separateness from His creation and His authority over it.

Finally, when we speak of God's holiness we are addressing His moral purity. Which brings us to a consideration of His holiness as it relates to the second person of the Trinity, Christ.

B. Identical With the Father's: This means we will take the time to discuss a basic truth that must be accepted for a person to even call themselves a believer, that Christ is God, that when we speak of God's holiness, we are addressing all three persons of the Godhead. And yes, we all know this but part of walking in holiness is being able to share God's truth with those who have not yet accepted it.

It is the implications of the Trinity that expands the concept of God's holiness. First God is there in personhood and one in substance, essence, or nature. This means that in character whether we're addressing the Father, Son, or Spirit, we are describing the same thing. Clearly then Christ's holiness in His deity is no different than that of the Father.

The other issue for many is the truth of the incarnation. The ideal that Christ is fully God while simultaneously fully man is beyond their comprehension, which as we noted last week isn't a problem, so they reject it.

Yet God who stands outside of His creation, through the incarnation stepped into it. He didn't become one with it, which would be pantheism. But through the incarnation He moved into time and space and stood along side his creatures. John spoke to this when he said ...

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-5, 9-14 ESV).

And so when we speak of Christ's holiness we mean the same "awefilledness"...

“When I [John] saw him [Christ], I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore” (Revelation 1:17–18 ESV).

The same relationship to His creation, for He is its creator as we already saw John describe. And of course as we saw in Jesus’ actions in the Temple He demonstrated holiness in its aspect of moral purity. And this brings us to Christ’s holiness ...

C. In the New Testament: And of course the first demonstration of Christ’s holiness was His uniqueness in the incarnation. Consider His moral purity as referred to throughout the New Testament.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15 ESV).

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22 ESV).

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV).

“You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.” (1 John 3:5 ESV).

It was only because of Christ’s holiness, His sinless perfection that He could provide for our salvation. Again let me repeat a couple of verses.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV).

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15 ESV).

So, through the incarnation God’s holiness became first, the basis under which we could be saved and then, as we accepted that salvation, we could be called holy and called to be holy. And it is through the Gospels that we see Christ’s life laid out as an example of what it means to live a holy life, so we can, in dependency on the Spirit, model our lives after His. Jerry Bridges put it this way ...

“A ... reason we need to consider the holiness of Christ is because His life is meant to be an example of holiness for us. Peter told us that Christ left an example for us to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2: 21). Peter spoke particularly of Christ’s suffering without retaliation, but in the following verse he said also that Christ committed no sin. Paul urged us to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5: 1), and also said “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11: 1).”²

² Bridges, Jerry, The Pursuit of Holiness, NavPress, Carol Stream, IL, 2014, p. 61-62.

It is this holiness lived out that we see in the events at the Temple previously noted. It was because Jesus was both man and God that He demonstrated His holiness in moral indignation at the abuse of the Temple, and His righteous judgment in casting out those who, while claiming to serve God, actually brought dishonor on His Name.

Jesus's walk also demonstrated the reality of what holiness wasn't, that is a requirement to the appearance of righteousness. In fact it was His rejection of superficial "holiness" that got Him in trouble with the religious leaders of His day.

“ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”” (Matthew 12:1–8 ESV).

Jesus rejects the list of don'ts as the criteria for evaluating a person's holiness. And so, finally we see Christ's holiness as we look into how He serves now and in eternity.

“ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens” (Heb. 7:26 ESV).

“ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1 ESV).

“ And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments”” (Revelation 16:5 ESV).

D. As Christ's Character: As we have already note Christ was holy as it relates to moral purity. But it is important to remember that this moral purity didn't exist in a vacuum. That is, it was demonstrated and becomes an example to God's expectations for us.

First it was demonstrated in that ...

“ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:17–18 ESV).

And can consequently call us to live out moral holiness in that ...

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV).

He demonstrated His character of holiness as it related to being separated from the world to the will of the Father and the Father’s purposes.

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” ... “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (John 6:38; 4:34 ESV).

And with this same perspective Jesus prayed in the garden ...

“My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” (Mat 26:42 ESV).

“Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11 ESV).

So as with the Father, Christ cannot violate His own nature. His commitment was to the Father’s will no matter the cost. He came for a purpose, to manifest in a practical way His love for us, His creation. And that practical way was the Cross. Did that mean He was unaffected by everything He went through? By no means! What it meant was His commitment to His calling out weighed any consequences to following that calling.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”” (Matthew 27:45–46 ESV).

As with the Father, Christ’s character includes not just holiness, though that is foundational, it includes righteousness, justice, and love, and mercy. While He cannot accept unrighteousness, He points to the way of forgiveness and gifted righteousness and holiness.

“Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”” (John 8:10–11 ESV).

He is merciful, to those who seek His mercy, but He will judge, He must judge, those who reject His gift of Himself as propitiation for sin.

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Peter 3:9–10 ESV).

“ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:11–16 ESV).

Conclusion: What have we seen this morning? First that when we speak of Christ, we speak of God, for while He is a separate person of the Godhead, simultaneously He is one in substance within Godhead. Consequently, when we speak of the Character of God, we are also speaking of the Character of Christ.

“ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14 ESV).

“ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58 ESV).

We’ve seen that in the Incarnation, as part of Christ’s character He acted as a servant, submissive to the will of the Father.

“ When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:28–29 ESV).

And finally, we saw that as a Holy, Just, and Righteous God, one day Christ will come to judge unrighteousness.

“ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11–15 ESV).

Accordingly if we are to consider how we are to live out the reality of our call to holiness, as we will next week, we are to look to Christ’s example. Or as Bridges put it ...

“In the words of nineteenth-century Scottish theologian John Brown, “Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills.” Neither does holiness mean, as is so often thought, adhering to a list of “do’s and don’ts,” mostly don’ts. When Christ came into the world, He said, “I have come to do your will, O God” (Hebrews 10: 7). This is the example we are to follow. In all of our thoughts, all of our actions, in every part of our character, the ruling principle that motivates and guides us should be the desire to follow Christ in doing the will of the Father. This is the high road we must follow in the pursuit of holiness.”³

And so with the hymn writer, let us say ...

*More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to other show,
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me.*

*More about Jesus let me learn,
More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God, my teacher be,
Showing the things of Christ to me.*

*More about Jesus, in His Word,
Holding communion with my Lord
Hearing His voice in ev’ry line,
Making each faithful saying mine.*

*More about Jesus on His throne
Riches in glory all His own,
More of His kingdom’s sure increase,
More of His coming—Prince of Peace*

*More, more about Jesus,
More, more about Jesus,
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me!⁴*

³ Ibid., p. 63-64

⁴ Hewitt, Eliza E., *The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration*, “*More About Jesus*,” Word Music, Waco, TX, 1986, #389.

The Call to Holiness

The Holiness of Christ

Various Passages

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 - C. In the New Testament**
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Introduction:

(1 Peter 1:15–16)

B. Identical With the Father's:

(John 1:1–5, 9–14; Revelation 1:17–18)

C. In the New Testament:

(Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 12:1–8; Hebrew 7:26; 1 John 2:1; Revelation 16:5)

D. As Christ's Character:

(Hebrews 2:17–18; 1 Corinthians 10:13; John 6:38; 4:34; Matthew 26:42; Isaiah 53:11; Matthew 27:45–46; John 8:10–11; Revelation 19:11–16)

Conclusion:

(Exodus 3:14; John 8:58; John 8:28–29; Revelation 20:11–15)