

God Alone is Holy

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A couple weeks ago Rick Railston gave a sermon titled, What Does it Mean to Grieve the Holy Spirit? In that sermon he read scriptures explaining God's purpose in calling us to be His holy people. There were four verses that caught my attention because I had been researching the topic of holiness. In my study I've been trying to understand the significance of the scriptures that state that the LORD alone is holy. It actually says, *You alone are holy*, quoting from the verse. I've been trying to understand the uniqueness of the source of holiness.

What constitutes being holy? How is it that we can become holy and yet through our own folly be cast aside as unholy? Vile and abominable to God. As part of my introduction, I want to summarize my understanding from that part of Rick's sermon—what I got out of it and how it relates to what I want to talk about today. He explained that as a holy people, we are called saints. In Romans 1:7, he read where it says in the King James version, reading Romans 1:7. I'm just going to run through these that Rick went through a couple weeks ago.

Romans 1:7 *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

Rick noted that the word for *saint* was translated from the Greek word that has been Romanized in it's spelling of *hagios*. It's referenced by Strong's #40. He briefly described the meaning of *hagios* as "sacred, morally blameless" or "a holy person". He read from Ephesians 1:4 where we see that from the foundation of the world, God created the plan whereby we are chosen to become holy and unblemished before God. He read from the New International Version where it says:

Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy [hagios] and without fault in His eyes.

Rick went on in 2 Timothy 1:9 where it says, also in the International Version:

For God saved us and called us to live a holy [hagios] life.

He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan before the beginning of time to show us His grace through Jesus Christ. We are called to live a holy life. Those called and chosen to be holy are not selected based on their preexisting righteousness and holiness. Rather when called we are to start by repenting and move forward over time in correcting ourselves to maturity. He went on to read 1 Peter 1:2, where we can see the evidence that achieving God's purpose involves His effort in guiding us, His redeeming sacrifice for us through Christ, and our efforts to obey God

while learning what constitutes holiness. Quoting 1 Peter 1:2 in the New International Version.

1Peter 1:2 *God the Father knew you and chose you long ago and His spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed Him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.* (NIV)

The phrase *has made you holy* (or *sanctification* in the King James Version or the New King James Version) is translated from the Greek word *hagiasmos*, Strong's #38, which is generally translated *sanctification, holiness* or *purity*. This Greek word means “to make holy”. As you will soon see there is also another Greek word that also means “to make holy”. God is making us holy through His spirit. In addition to God’s work on our behalf, we must not neglect our part in God’s process of perfecting us. When I googled the words “holy” or “sacred” I read it’s connected to God for a religious purpose. The Meriam-Webster online dictionary says, concerning holy:

Worthy of complete devotion and trust; divine;
set apart to the service of God or a god.

The scriptures seem to indicate that God can declare anything to be holy because He is God and He is holy. Humans can make offering commitments to be used in holy service to God. We can offer ourselves in a commitment of our effort throughout life, in serving God. We can also offer our possessions. Third, we are also capable of defiling what God has made holy. As we look up the scriptures, I will normally be reading from the New King James Version and if I deviate from that I’ll try to say and make note of it.

There is a song in Revelation 15 that declares *the God—ho Theos—alone*, as holy. Mark Sappington has gone over this with us several times, what *ho Theos* means—*the God*. In my study I began to wonder what does that mean? What are the ramifications when we put that statement in perspective with the scriptures? This is important because if God alone is holy, then the standard of holiness must be established and come directly from the God. Holiness for everyone and everything else, by definition, must be granted from God. In Revelation 15:1 begins by establishing the time just before the seven angels having the seven last plagues, are sent out.

Revelation 15:1 *Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.* (NKJV)

Notice the word *God* here is translated from the Greek phrase *ho Theos*. As we go along here, we will see that in the Greek there is an emphasis in these verses that God is one unique entity. It’s not a family. This is talking about honoring God—the God—known by the name Yehovah in the Old Testament. Also known in the New Testament as the Father of Jesus Christ.

2) *And I saw something like a sea of glass [this is John speaking] mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. (NKJV)*

God is *Ho Theos* in the Greek—the *God*.

3) *They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God [ho Theos], and the song of the Lamb ... (NKJV)*

There are three songs recorded in the Bible—three songs of Moses. You can find them in Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, and Psalms 90. For me it is not exactly clear how many songs will be sung here. In Revelation 15, it looks like there will be at least two songs and they will be making the same point. Continuing in verse 3 where the lyrics begin.

3 continued) ... saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! (NKJV)

For those using translations other than the King James Version or the New King James Version, you might notice the phrase "*King of the nations*" instead of *King of the saints*. Some translations use "*King of the ages*". I personally do not know which correctly represents what John wrote and the scholars don't seem to know either, from the research that I was able to do. I did see an interesting article on the subject, if you are interested in doing some research on that. It's called KJVToday.com. If you would like to look up that article. I thought it was interesting.

The Greek word translated here as *saints* in the King James Version is the same word that Rick described from Romans 1:7. The Greek word here is *hagios* which could be translated as *holy ones*. They are singing about the *King of the holy ones—the saints*. No matter the translation, the point is that the King they are singing of is the LORD God Almighty. *God Almighty* is translated from the Greek phrase, using Romanized letters, *ho Theos Strong's #2316*) and *ho Pantokrator Strong's #3841*. *Pantokrator* means "almighty or omnipotent". The significance of the Greek word 'ho' is that it is used as a definite article twice, for both or once for each—once before *theos* and once before *Pantokrator*. The King James translators omitted the definite article, but by including them we get more clarity in the definitive statement. *The God, The Almighty*—giving us a clearer view of who is the focus of this song of praise.

Before I move on, I want to address the Greek word translated *Lord*. The word is *Strong's #2962* and the word identified is *kurios* which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "lord" or "master". Mark Sappington has explained to us in the past that when we see *kurios* without the definite article "the", the reference is to Yehovah, God our Father. I believe he said that in every case. During the time when Greek was the most common language of the world, the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek by 70 Hebrew scholars. They translated the Hebrew name for God, which is Yehovah, from Hebrew to the Greek word, *kurios*. Here in Revelation 15:3, the *kurios* is

spelled in the vocative case. The transliterated vocative case spelling for *kurios* is *kyre* or as some people spell it, *kurye*. The vocative case identifies a noun. In this verse the noun in Hebrew would be *Yehovah* or in Greek, *kurios*. The word LORD identifies Yehovah or Kurios in the vocative case. Because the Greek spelling for *Kurios* is in the vocative case, the phrase follows the scribes or identifies attributes of Yehovah as opposed to *kurios* being part of the description. The meaning of the phrase, “Lord God Almighty” when considered with the vocative case, which is designated by the vocative case spelling which I just mentioned, is *kyre* and should be read LORD, the God—because it’s *ho Theos*—and *the Almighty, ho Pantokrator*. Using God’s name from the Old Testament—Yehovah, the God, the Almighty. I think an accurate paraphrase—my personal accurate paraphrase—is Yehovah who is the God, who is the Almighty. The focus of this song is venerating Yehovah. Continuing in verse 4.

4) Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? (NKJV)

The word “you” is not in the Greek, it was added by the English translators and unfortunately, in my opinion, obscures the vocative case nature of the phrase. The additional descriptors of Yehovah are that He should be feared, His name will be glorified and that He alone is holy.

4 continued) ... For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.” (NKJV)

The word translated *holy* is a different word than the *hagios* that we saw in Strong’s #40, translated in verse 3 as *holy* or *saints*. It’s translated as *saints* here in verse 3 and *holy* in 2 Timothy 1:9, which we read in the beginning. The Romanized Greek word translated as *holy* is *hosios* which is Strong’s #3741 and is used 8 times in the New Testament. Essentially, it is a synonym of *hagios* and in this case, it means “holy one”. I’m taking the time to explain these terms a little bit because this verse would have been difficult to understand when we thought of God as a family or that Jesus was the Yehovah of the Old Testament. Most, if not all the King James and New King James translators of the Greek into English had a trinity bias concerning the nature of God. Because of the trinity bias, the vocative case, I think, would not have seemed important to be included and therefore they didn’t do that in the translations. I hope that going through this we have a better clarity.

Yehovah alone is holy. You might be thinking, how can that be? There are many objects and living people or individuals or living things that are called holy. The place where Moses was first confronted by God was declared holy ground and Moses was required to remove his shoes. The Temple was holy, the inner sanctuary and the holy of holies—a place holier than any other holy place. Jesus Christ is identified as the holy one. The statement that God alone is holy means that in and of Himself, the Messiah—Jesus Christ—is not holy. Jesus was made holy by God the Father. Jesus confirms this in John 10. The context of the latter part of the chapter is that Jesus was being asked by the Jews if He was the Messiah. I think James Smyda went over some of this last week. He responded that He had already told them and they did not believe Him. He told them

that they should be able to see that He was the Messiah by observing His works that He did in the name of the Father. The Jews picked up stones to kill Him and were about to stone Him. He asked them why they thought they should stone Him, especially after considering all the good works He was able to show them from God the Father. Remember, Jesus was powerless in Himself to heal anyone. All the miracles requested by Jesus, He prayed to God and God actually did the healing. Jesus did not have supernatural powers but had direct interaction and connection with God and God was able to perform the miracles.

The Jews said it was not for good works, they were going to stone Him, but rather He said He was the Son of God and in their opinion making Himself God. Jesus answered, John 10:34.

John 10:34 *Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, I said, "You are god"?"*

35) If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

36) do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified [Strong's #0037] and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming, 'because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (NKJV)

In verse 36, the word *sanctified* is translated from the Greek word *hagiazō* Strong's #37. *Hagiazō* means "to make holy, consecrate, sanctify". Jesus is telling the Jews that God made Him holy. He was not claiming to be holy in and of Himself. He was holy because of what God imputed to Him. Jesus never sinned, He did not sin before His physical existence, He did not sin during His physical existence, He has been resurrected to eternal life as being born again into spiritual salvation. He will never sin. He will never sin because He chooses to never sin. He knows God and He knows God's law. Jesus is faithful towards God in everything. He is full of righteousness and Jesus says, here in John 10:36 that it is God the Father that makes Him holy.

We are called to be perfect. Matthew 5 starts the beatitudes where Jesus expounds on God's expectations. From the beatitudes we get a perspective of how God thinks so we can align our way of thinking with God's. In Matthew 5:48.

Matthew 5:48 *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (NKJV)*

This command to be perfect is nestled in between the command, love your enemies, don't think highly of yourself because you love someone who loves you back. Even those who are evil do that. Don't try to show off with your good deeds. Do your good deeds in quietness and humility. Notice Leviticus 19. Jesus was perfect. He was perfect by virtue of His own will and strength. Jesus was and is perfect, yet He is only made holy by Yehovah our Almighty God. Leviticus 19:1-5.

Leviticus 19:1 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*

2) *“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. (NKJV)*

Yehovah spoke to Moses and declared the children of Israel to be holy. Then He declared His authority to make them holy. He has the authority to declare them holy because He is Yehovah and is holy and He is God. Then He begins to described in His instructions to Moses, His expectations of holy conduct. The Israelites were given clear instructions concerning holy conduct and thought.

3) *Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.*

4) *Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God.*

5) *And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will. (NKJV)*

Then He goes on to explaining His instructions of holy behavior. In Leviticus 11 we are to learn what responsibilities and conduct are expected of one that is to be holy. We will be expected to conduct ourselves in a holy manner for all of eternity into the future. God is training us in how to be holy. We are learning to use our thought processes in order to make wise decisions. He uses physical needs of life to guide and teach us.

Leviticus 11:41 *And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. (NKJV)*

From the very essential basics of life—consuming food—we are taught to use our knowledge to make choices based on God’s instructions.

42) *Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.*

43) *You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. (NKJV)*

In the first three verses that we just read, we are told God’s decisions concerning what we eat. Then we are told, based on what authority He makes that demand.

44) *For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*

45) *For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*

46) *This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth ... (NKJV)*

Then He tells us that the reason for the distinction between what we should eat and not eat—I'm quoting in verse 47.

47) to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten. ” (NKJV)

In Leviticus 10:8 we are being taught to make wise decisions based on knowledge and submission to God's authority. God uses time and circumstance to help us understand and make wise decisions.

Leviticus 10:8 *Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying:*

9) Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations,

10) that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean ... (NKJV)

Then God adds the additional responsibility to teach and pass on to others, the proper understanding and wisdom required by the holy God.

11) and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.” (NKJV)

As it says—we won't turn there for time—in Hebrews 5:12 and 13, we are to become teachers. It's the same instruction He was giving Aaron and his sons—becoming teachers. Turn to Revelation 3. As we grow and mature, we learn to avoid what defiles us and to pursue what is pleasing to God. God expects us to become worthy of our calling.

Revelation 3:4 *You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.*

5) He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (NKJV)

If we do not learn God's expectations for us, in our conduct and responsibilities, we may be rejected. That is explained in the Parable of the Wedding Supper in Matthew 22. The proper attire in Revelation 3 was undefiled white garments. Here in the Matthew 22 parable, we will see the penalty for not having the proper attire for the occasion. We need to be ready when appropriate and expected.

Matthew 22:11 *But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.*

12) So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. (NKJV)

He was speechless—he was not prepared. He had not done what was expected and required to be a part of the wonderful Feast or the wonderful event. He was not worthy.

13) *Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*
14) *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* (NKJV)

The man who did not properly prepare would have been better off not even knowing that there was an event to attend. By knowing and not preparing himself, he condemned himself. In Romans 12 we are to learn what responsibility and conduct are expected of a person that is to be holy.

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (NKJV)

You might want to hold your place here in Romans 12 and turn back to Leviticus 20. This is God's instruction to Moses, what he was to tell the children of Israel. He was telling them to commit to the dedication of themselves as holy before Yehovah.

Leviticus 20:7 *Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.*
8) *And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you.* (NKJV)

As we saw, sanctifies, makes holy. Back to Romans 12. The process of becoming perfect in holiness is a process that involves Yehovah and the effort of each of us. God sanctifies us or declares us holy and we must commit ourselves in sacrifice to doing what it takes to become worthy of God's holiness given to us.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* (NKJV)

As sanctified or made holy—you might want to turn to John 17—we are expected to present our bodies as a living sacrifice in service to God. Jesus Christ did the same. He allowed Himself to be sacrificed for the holy cause of redeeming us from the penalty of death. We are going to be cutting into Jesus' prayer to God just before He was taken into custody to be tortured and crucified by the Romans. John 17—this is Jesus praying to God.

John 17:17 *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.* (NKJV)

God the Father is holy and we can trust Him to make us holy. He's setting them apart—*sanctify* means "to make holy".

18) As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. (NKJV)

So, we also have obligations to Jesus. We are obligated to Jesus. As God sent Him, Jesus has sent us—He sent His apostles and they in turn in later generations, we are also sent. We are sent to do a work.

19) And for their sakes I sanctify Myself ... (NKJV)

Setting Himself apart as holy. He is dedicating His life into holy service. Jesus offered Himself to God for a holy purpose and that purpose was:

19 continued) ... that they also may be sanctified by the truth. (NKJV)

In other words, we can be 100% trusted that we can become holy and Jesus committed His life to God for that purpose. Yehovah, the God, the Almighty is a sole arbiter of what is holy. Yehovah has a plan for what is a new creation, a holy family. Jesus and all of us are part of that plan. To date, Jesus is the only one that has been born into that family. His holiness is based on Yehovah, Yehovah making Him holy. Our holiness is based on Yehovah making us holy. Remember, that Yehovah—the God alone—is holy.