

DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE OF THE HOLY LIFE

A Course Guide for
Shepherd's Global Classroom

Christ-Centered. Training. Everywhere.

by Randall McElwain



Lesson Assignment

- 1) Imagine that a new Christian said to you, “I read in the Bible that God calls us to be holy as he is holy. That seems impossible! What does it mean to be holy?” Write a one-page answer to this new believer. At your next class meeting, each student should read their answer. Give time to discuss the answers as a class.
- 2) Begin the next class session by quoting 1 Peter 1:14-16.
- 3) This course includes a final project that is due on the last day of class. You should begin work on this project now. Turn to page 202 at the end of the course for details about this project.

Digging Deeper

These books are the primary sources for these lessons. They are used extensively throughout these lessons. Except for specific quotes, I will not footnote these books.

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- Cattell, Everett L. *The Spirit of Holiness* (revised edition). Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2015.
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- Kinlaw, Dennis. *The Mind of Christ*. IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1998.
- Kinlaw, Dennis. *This Day with the Master*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
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**Lesson 1 in One Page
 The Beauty of Holiness**

- ✓ The beauty of holiness is seen in God's original creation. God created a perfect world without sin.
- ✓ The beauty of holiness is seen in the nature of God. God is a holy God.
- ✓ The beauty of holiness is seen in God's plan for his people. Even though sin corrupted man's nature, God did not give up on his plan for a holy people. To restore relationship between a holy God and fallen humanity, God taught:
 - What a holy God is like
 - What a holy person is like
- ✓ There are many false ideas about holiness. These include:
 - Only a few people can be holy
 - We become holy by living apart from other people
 - We become holy only when we die
 - We become holy by following certain rules
 - The evidence that a person is holy is seen in a special gift of tongues or miracles
 - Holiness is impossible
- ✓ The truth about holiness is simple. This is what it means to be holy:
 - To be holy is to maintain a close relationship with God
 - To be holy is to reflect God's image
 - To be holy is to be separated to God
 - To be holy is to have an undivided heart
 - To be holy is to live a righteous life
 - To be holy is to have perfect love for God and our neighbor
 - To be holy is to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit
 - To be holy is to be Christlike
 - Holiness prepares us to see God
- ✓ Three New Testament texts show the importance of holiness in the life of the believer.
 - Romans 8:29 shows God's eternal purpose to form us in the image of his Son
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18 shows that God's purpose is being accomplished as we are transformed daily into the image of Christ
 - 1 John 3:2 shows the fulfillment of God's purpose; when we see God, we will be like him



➡ **2 Corinthians 3:18** looks at the present and shows how this purpose is being accomplished in the life of the believer today:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being “changed from one degree of glory to another.” God’s purpose is accomplished in the transformation of his children through the power of the Holy Spirit. Day by day, we are made more like Christ.

➡ **1 John 3:2** looks to the future and shows the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purpose:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The Book of Revelation looks to a day when we will see God face to face. On that day, we will be like him. God’s purpose will be fulfilled completely and eternally. John Stott concluded, “We will be with Christ, like Christ, forever.”

As Christians, our pursuit of a holy life is preparing us for the day when we see God and his purpose in our life is fulfilled. This should give us an earnestness about our growth in holiness. Each day we are being transformed more and more into his image.

As we seek to be more and more like him, we are cooperating with God’s eternal purpose. Holiness is God’s eternal purpose for every believer. As God’s children, we should have a passion to see this purpose accomplished in our hearts and lives.

A Prayer for Holiness

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
sing and cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

-Charles Wesley

John: A Man Who Saw the Fulfillment of God’s Plan
A Perfect World
Holiness is Unbroken Fellowship with God
Holiness in Practice: When I Don’t Feel Holy
She Found the Secret... Fanny Crosby

Is a Holy Life Possible? Lesson 12

Paul: A Man Who Pursued Holiness
Is a Holy Life Possible?
Is a Holy Life for You?
The Path to Holiness
Ten Practical Ways to Cultivate a Daily Life of Holiness
Have You Found the Secret?



Conclusion: A Holy God Calls His People to Be Holy

Dr. John Stott was one of the great evangelists of the twentieth century. In one of his last sermons, Dr. Stott spoke about God's purpose for his people.¹⁹ We have been saved by grace through faith; we have been brought from death to life. Why? God's purpose for saving us is to make us like Christ. Dr. Stott said, "Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God."

Three New Testament texts show how our growth in Christlikeness on earth prepares us to live with God. These texts show the importance of holiness in the life of the believer.

➡ Romans 8:29 looks to the past and shows God's eternal purpose for his children:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God's eternal purpose is that we be "conformed to the image of his Son." From the beginning, God's purpose was to make us like Christ. Romans 8:28 promises that "for those who love God all things work together for good." This promise is for "those who are called according to his purpose." What is his purpose? God's predestined purpose is to make his children in the image of his Son. God saved us to make us holy.

"God has one destined end for mankind – holiness. His one aim is the production of saints. He came to save men because He had created them to be holy."

Oswald Chambers

Paul reminded the Colossian Christians of the wonderful change God had made in their lives: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death." Through the death of Christ, these people who had been "hostile" to God were now "reconciled" with him. Paul then reminded these believers of God's purpose in reconciling them to himself: "in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him."²⁰

Paul does not say simply, "You have been reconciled to God so that you can spend eternity in heaven." That is wonderful news! But it is not the complete Good News. Paul says, "You have been reconciled to God so that you can be holy." God's purpose is to make his children holy and blameless.

¹⁹ <http://www.langhampartnership.org/2007/08/06/john-stott-address-at-keswick/>

²⁰ Col. 1:21-22.



Although Morris planned to return to Liberia, God had a different plan. Within two years of arriving at Taylor University, Samuel Morris died from pneumonia. He was only twenty years old, but he was at peace with God's plan. Samuel told the president of the university, "It is not my work. It is his. I have finished my job. He will send others better than I to do the work in Africa."

Morris's life impacted so many people that hundreds of people lined the streets for the funeral procession. Several fellow students went to Africa as missionaries, serving "in memory of Prince Kaboo." The president of Taylor University said, "Samuel Morris was God's messenger to Taylor University. He thought he was coming here to prepare himself for his mission. Instead, God sent him to prepare Taylor University for her mission to the whole world. All who met him were impressed with his sublime, yet simple faith in God."

Today, a memorial plaque at Samuel Morris' grave in Fort Wayne, Indiana reads:

Samuel Morris
1873-1893
Prince Kaboo
Native of West Africa
Famous Christian Mystic
Apostle of Simple Faith
Exponent of the Spirit-filled life

The short life of Samuel Morris shows that every believer can live in the power of the Holy Spirit. A holy heart and a holy life is God's purpose for every believer.

Lesson 1 The Beauty of Holiness

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student should:

- (1) Appreciate the beauty of God's holiness and his plan to make us holy.
- (2) Reject false concepts of holiness and recognize biblical concepts of holiness.
- (3) Be equipped to explain to a new believer what it means to be holy.
- (4) Memorize 1 Peter 1:14-16.

Introduction

Holiness is one of the central themes of the Bible. In Scripture, God showed us who he is: he is a holy God. Then, God showed us who we can become by his grace: we can be a holy people.

In every true believer, there is a hunger for holiness. As God's children, we yearn to be like him. Sadly, much of the modern church has accepted the false idea that holiness is impossible. Instead of seeking to be like Christ, many professed Christians settle for defeated, sinful lives. Instead of a victorious Christian life, many Christians settle for "sin management."

More than one hundred years ago, John Hyde, the great missionary to India, said, "What we need today is a revival of holiness." If that was true then, it is certainly true in the sinful world of the twenty-first century.

If holiness is so important to God, we must ask, "What does it mean to be holy?" If holiness is commanded in Scripture, we must ask, "Is it possible to live a holy life?"

In this course, we will learn what God means when he says, "Be holy, for I am holy." As we understand the message of holiness in the Bible, we will see that a holy life is possible for every Christian. Each lesson will include three elements:

- 1) We will study the meaning of biblical words such as "holy," "sanctification," and "perfect." This section is a biblical theology of holiness.
- 2) We will study practical aspects of the holy life. We will learn what the Bible teaches about a holy life, a pure heart, and a Christlike spirit.
- 3) We will look at the life of a Christian who demonstrates what it means to be holy. We will see how a holy person acts in daily life.



◆ Before continuing this lesson, read each of the following Scriptures carefully and discuss the questions. This will introduce some of the topics we will study in these lessons.¹

Leviticus 19:2

According to this passage, why was Israel to be holy?

1 Peter 1:15-16

What kind of conduct are believers to have?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

What sins were some Corinthians guilty of according to this passage?

According to this passage, in whose name had the Corinthians been washed, justified and sanctified (made holy)?

Which person of the trinity had made them holy (vs.11)?

Why do you think these “sanctified” Corinthians were still acting in “carnal” ways?

Hebrews 12:14

According to this passage, what two qualities must Christians pursue if they want to see the Lord?

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

God calls every believer to abstain from what sins?

God has called his people to what?

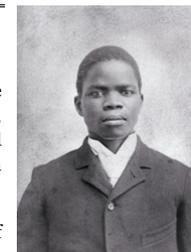
Revelation 20:6

What is the spiritual characteristic of those who will take part in the first resurrection?

¹ These questions were collected by Rev. Timothy Keep.



He Found the Secret... Samuel Kaboo Morris



In 1873, Samuel Morris was born in Liberia, West Africa as Prince Kaboo, the son of a tribal chief. When his father was defeated in battle, Kaboo was held for ransom. One day, Kaboo saw a bright light and heard a voice from heaven telling him to run. The ropes that held him fell to the ground, and Kaboo ran into the jungle.

He walked through the jungle for days until he arrived in the city of Monrovia. In the city, a young boy invited Kaboo to church. When Kaboo visited the church, a missionary was telling the story of Paul's conversion. As she told about the bright light and voice from heaven, Kaboo recognized that this was the voice he had heard in the jungle! He soon accepted Christ as his Savior and was baptized with the name Samuel Morris.

During the next two years, Samuel Morris painted houses to support himself while he studied the Bible. He was particularly interested in learning about the Holy Spirit and life in the power of the Spirit. After a missionary told him she had taught him all she knew, Morris asked, “Who was your teacher?” She told him about a holiness preacher in America named Stephen Merritt. With no money and no transportation, Morris walked to the nearest seaport to find a ship to America. He was determined to learn more about living in the Spirit.

He slept on the beach waiting for a ship. When a ship landed, Morris asked the captain to take him to America. The captain refused, but a short time later, two of his crew members ran away. The captain then told Morris that he could work in exchange for transportation to New York. During the voyage, he was mistreated by the crew and given the most dangerous tasks on board. However, Samuel showed the love of Christ to his shipmates until, by the time the ship arrived in New York, the captain and most of the crew had been converted.

When Morris arrived in New York, he found Stephen Merritt's mission and told him of his desire to learn more about the Holy Spirit. Mr. Merritt had to go to a meeting but left Morris at the mission for the evening. When he came back, he found Samuel leading a prayer meeting. On his first night in America, Samuel Morris led nearly twenty people to Christ.

Stephen Merritt helped Samuel Morris enroll at Taylor University so he could prepare to evangelize in Liberia. Morris arrived at the campus in Indiana with no money, but with complete faith in God's provision. He said to the president, “Please give me a room that no one else wants.” Late at night, his fellow students would hear him “talking to my Father.” His absolute trust in God influenced the campus as well as surrounding churches.



- To be holy is to live a righteous life

The prophets preached to a people who thought, “We worship in the temple and offer sacrifices. We are holy.” The prophets showed that it is not enough to follow rituals. To be holy means to live righteously towards God and others. Holy people “do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God.”¹⁸

- To be holy is to have perfect love for God and our neighbor

The Gospels show God’s fullest revelation of holiness in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus had a holy heart that was fully submitted to the will of the Father. Jesus had holy hands that acted in perfect love towards others. Jesus showed that to be holy means to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

- To be holy is to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit

In Acts, we see the example of Christians who were filled with God’s Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they lived holy lives. We are holy only as we live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

- To be holy is to be Christlike

Jesus was the perfect example of a holy heart and holy hands. The Epistles show that it is possible for ordinary Christians to follow the example of Jesus Christ. The Epistles provide practical guidelines for living a holy life on a daily basis. These letters teach us how to live as Christlike people.

We must be holy, because this is one grand purpose for which Christ came into the world.

To talk of men being saved from the guilt of sin without being saved from its dominion in their hearts is to contradict the witness of all Scripture.

Jesus is a complete Savior. He does not merely take away the guilt of sin; he breaks its power.

Paraphrased from Bishop J.C. Ryle

- Holiness prepares us to see God

In Eden, God prepared a garden where a holy people could live in perfect relationship with our Father. Because of sin, we were driven from the garden. But God did not give up on his plan. In Revelation, we see that God’s people will someday see his face. No sinful person can look on him, but God is preparing a holy people who will spend eternity in his presence. This is God’s purpose for his people.

¹⁸ Micah 6:8.



The Beauty of Holiness

◆ *When you hear a person described as “holy,” what image comes to mind? Is your image positive or negative? Why?*

A missionary once visited an old African chief. The chief asked, “What is a Christian?” The missionary answered, “A Christian doesn’t steal his enemy’s cattle. A Christian doesn’t run off with his enemy’s wife. A Christian doesn’t murder his enemy.”

The chief said, “I understand. Being a Christian is the same as being old! When I was young, I attacked my enemy and stole his wife and cattle. Now I am too old to attack my enemy; I am a Christian!”

Sadly, this is how many people think of the message of a holy life. They think holiness is no more than a list of sins to avoid. They miss the beauty of holiness as it is taught in God’s Word.



False Ideas of Holiness

God is a holy God. God’s people must be holy. This message is central to the Bible. However, there are many wrong beliefs about holiness.

Some people believe that only a few people can be holy. They divide Christians into two groups. The first group is Christian in their beliefs, and they have accepted Christ as their Savior, but they do not faithfully obey God in their actions and attitudes. The second group is made up of Christians who have reached a higher level – priests, pastors, or saints. According to this idea, only a few Christians are holy.

Some people believe that we become holy by living apart from other people. Many years ago, some “holy people” went into the desert to live. One man spent thirty-seven years on a platform high above the ground. He believed that we become holy by avoiding other people.

Some people believe that we become holy only when we die. They believe that we will never fulfill God’s purpose in this life, but that we will be made holy when we die. With this belief, death is not our enemy but our friend. In death, we finally achieve God’s purpose for his people.

Some people believe that we become holy by following rules. They believe that we become holy by dressing in a certain style or by following a list of “do’s and don’ts.” They believe that holiness is about outward appearances, not a transformed heart.

Some people believe that the evidence that a person is holy is a special gift of tongues or miracles. They measure holiness not by a holy life, but by signs and wonders.



Finally, many people believe that holiness is impossible! They believe that holiness is an ideal that God gave to challenge us to do our best, but it is not realistic in this world. With this belief, no one can achieve God's command to "Be holy."

However, God's command to "Be holy" is a command that he intends us to obey. God is a good Father; he never commands us to do something that is impossible through his grace. To be holy is to be what God created us to be. In our own power, a holy heart is impossible, but in God's power, a holy heart is possible for every believer. Holiness comes from God's grace, not from our efforts.

◆ *Which of these false ideas of holiness is most common in the area where you minister? Is holiness seen as beautiful among Christians in your community?*

The Bible's Picture of Holiness

Unlike the negative ideas of holiness listed above, the Bible shows holiness as a beautiful possibility for God's children. Think of the things called holy in the Bible. None of them are ugly and repulsive; they are beautiful and attractive.

- God's holy nature is beautiful and glorious.
- The things in the temple that were holy were beautiful.
- Israel was called to be a holy nation that would draw other people to God. Her holiness attracted people; it did not drive them away.²
- The church is called to be a holy people. She is to be a beautiful bride prepared for her Bridegroom.

Each of these pictures is attractive. The Bible shows that true holiness is not abusive and fearful. Instead, it is the loving gift of our heavenly Father. If we see holiness for what it is, we should hunger for a holy heart and a holy life. If we preach holiness as the Bible teaches it, our people should hunger for a holy heart and a holy life. Holiness is a beautiful gift from a loving Father.

² You might say, "But what about the Pharisees? They were considered 'holy' people, but they drove others away." We will see in these lessons that the Pharisee's "holiness" was not genuine holiness. Their righteousness was an outward profession, not true holiness.



What Does It Mean to Be Holy?

Through his Word, God taught his people what it means to be holy. When God began to teach his people, they knew nothing about holiness. They had never seen a holy God or a holy people. God taught the meaning of holiness much like we teach language to a child.

When we teach a young child, we point to a chair and say, "Chair." We point to a car and say, "Car." Step by step, the child is learning the meaning of words. The child learns the meaning of the word "love" by experiencing their mother's love. The child learns the meaning of the word "justice" when a parent gives a just punishment for disobedience.

God taught the meaning of holiness in the same way. As fallen people, we did not know what it means to be holy. God gradually revealed the meaning of holiness to his people through word pictures that illustrate what it means to be holy. As we trace the meaning of the word holiness through the Bible, we will see:

- To be holy is to maintain a close relationship with God

Holy men in Genesis (men like Enoch and Abraham) were men who had a close relationship with God. They "walked with God." By showing the life of holy men, God revealed that a holy person is a person who has a close relationship with God.

- To be holy is to reflect the image of God

Holiness is not a natural characteristic of man. Holiness is an attribute of God alone. Israel was called to "be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."¹⁷ To be holy means to reflect the image of God in our lives. To be holy means to be like God.

- To be holy is to be separated to God

The first time the word "holy" is used in the Bible, it refers to a day that has been set apart for God's special purposes. The Sabbath day was holy; it was separated, or set apart, from the other six days. Like a child learning the meaning of "chair," God pointed to the seventh day and said, "It is holy."

- To be holy is to have an undivided heart

In the Historical Books, God used the word "perfect" to describe people who had an "undivided heart." To be holy means to be single-minded in our commitment to God. A holy heart loves God without division.

¹⁷ Lev. 19:2.



The Beauty of Holiness Is Seen in God's Plan for His People

A holy God created humanity for relationship with himself, but our sin separated us from God. However, God was determined to restore relationship with his people. Since only holy people can live in the presence of a holy God, he provided a way to make us holy. God taught the meaning of holiness to people who were not holy. There are two parts to this process:

- First, God taught man the nature of a holy God. Marduk, Zeus, and Bacchus were powerful but immoral. God revealed himself as powerful and holy.
- Second, God taught man the nature of holy people. God said, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."¹⁵ Since God is holy, his people must be holy.

Isaiah preached to a sinful nation. Sin had destroyed the beauty of God's people. From God's chosen people, Israel had fallen to the shameful status of a conquered people carried away into captivity. She was no longer beautiful; she was a disgraced slave. But Isaiah foresaw a day when Israel's "righteousness goes forth as brightness." On that day, Israel "shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord."¹⁶

People who misunderstand the message of holiness in the Bible often portray holiness in terms of legalism, rigid rules, and stern faces. This is not a biblical view of holiness. Instead, to be holy is to show the beauty of God's own holiness. To be holy gives the joyful freedom to live in intimate relationship with a holy God. In the Bible, holiness is never a gloomy term; it is a term of joy and beauty!

In the Bible, God reveals his holy nature. Then, God teaches his people how to live holy lives. Even more importantly, God shows that he will give his people power to be what he has called us to be. Through his grace, God can make a holy people. God does not ignore sin in his children; instead, he makes us holy. A holy God desires relationship with a holy people.

¹⁵ Lev. 19:2.

¹⁶ Isa. 62:2-3.



The Beauty of Holiness is Seen in God's Original Creation

➤ God Created a Perfect World

Begin in Eden, a beautiful garden. Think of the sweetest fruit you have ever eaten; the fruit in Eden was sweeter. Think of the most beautiful flower you have ever seen; the flowers in Eden were more beautiful. God created a perfect world, a world without the effects of sin. He created a world without pain, tears, or death.

Most importantly, God created a world of intimate friendship between God and man. Nothing separated man from his Creator. Each day, God visited Adam and Eve. No other creature had this privilege. God created man for a special relationship with himself. In the Garden of Eden, there was perfect peace between God and man.

➤ Satan Corrupted God's Perfect World

Satan wanted to destroy this perfect world. Satan hated everything that God had created. Above all, Satan hated the close friendship between God and man. He was determined to destroy this relationship of love and trust.

Satan could not destroy man directly, so he determined to destroy the relationship between God and man. Satan knew that God is holy and that God created man in his image. Satan wanted to destroy God's holy image in man. Holy God and holy man would have an unbroken relationship, but Satan could destroy this relationship by tempting man into sin.

Satan came to Eve in the form of a snake. The snake questioned God's command. He asked, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" He wanted to cause Eve to doubt God's goodness. Eve answered, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"³

The snake accused God of keeping good from Adam and Eve. The snake said, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The snake tempted Eve to pride: "You will be like God."

Eve ate the fruit, gave it to Adam, and he ate. Adam and Eve knew they had broken God's law. When God came to the garden, they were ashamed and hid from him. The close friendship between God and man was broken.

³ Gen. 3:1-6.





God Did Not Give Up on His Creation

Because of their sin, God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. Sin broke the relationship between God and man. Sin damaged the image of God in man. But because of his love, God did not leave man in this horrible condition. God could have said, “Adam, you caused this mess. It is your problem! I’m walking away.” Instead, a loving God became part of our world and provided a remedy for our sin.

This remedy included a path to forgiveness. God provided a way to restore the relationship between a holy God and fallen man. The church has always preached, “Sinners can be made right with God.” Through the cross, we can be forgiven of our sins.

This is wonderful news! But sometimes the church has forgotten the other part of God’s remedy. God’s remedy for sin included not only a path to forgiveness but a path to restoration. God provided a way to restore his image in man.

God was not satisfied to say, “You can be free from the penalty of sin, but you will never be free from the power of sin.” No! God provided a way by which man could be made holy. God walked in the garden with a holy people; he cannot walk with a sinful people. God wants relationship with his people, so he provided a way to make us holy.

Throughout Scripture, we see God working to make a holy people with whom he can have relationship. God does not say, “I know you are sinful, but I will close my eyes to your sin and pretend you are righteous.” Instead, God promises to make his people holy.

The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.⁴

God wants to make his people holy. This is God’s purpose for his people. God promises that his people will “be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD.”⁵

⁴ Deut. 28:9.

⁵ Isa. 62:12.



The Beauty of Holiness Is Seen in the Nature of God

Because of the fall, man was no longer holy. We soon forgot the holy nature of God. God had created us “in his image.” Now, we created gods in our image – jealous, hateful, and proud.

The Babylonians told the story of Marduk who became the chief god by killing his mother. The Greeks told the story of Zeus who had many mistresses. The Romans told the story of Bacchus, the god of drunkenness and sensuality.

These gods were not holy. The people who worshiped these gods were like their gods. People lied, stole, and cheated just as their gods lied, stole, and cheated. Sinful man created sinful gods. In turn, these gods allowed man to continue in our sin. We became like the gods we worshiped.

Jehovah is not like these false gods. God is holy. Repeatedly, Scripture testifies to God’s holiness. After crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel praised their holy God. They sang, “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness....”⁶

The psalmist sang, “Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.”⁷ Israel praised God for his holiness. The psalmist called God the “Holy One of Israel.”⁸

The prophets testified that God is holy. Like the psalmist, they called God the “Holy One of Israel.”⁹ Isaiah called God the “Holy One of Israel” twenty-six times. Isaiah honored “the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy.”¹⁰ Holiness is so much a part of God’s character that for God to swear “by his holiness” was the same as to swear “by himself.”¹¹ Habakkuk testified that God is “of purer eyes than to see evil.”¹² The prophets knew that God is holy.

In heaven, the worship of God celebrates his holiness. The seraphim sang, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.”¹³ John the Revelator saw four creatures praising God. They sang, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”¹⁴ God is a holy God.

⁶ Exod. 15:11.

⁷ Psa. 22:3.

⁸ Psa. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18.

⁹ Isa. 5:19; 10:20; Jer. 50:29; 51:5; Ezek. 39:7.

¹⁰ Isa. 57:15.

¹¹ Amos 4:2; 6:8.

¹² Hab. 1:13.

¹³ Isa. 6:3.

¹⁴ Rev. 4:8.

