

The Holiness of God – Part IV

I'd like to articulate a few sentences to get our hearts right as we come in from busy days. Remembering the first session we escaped the mind by using human logic to come to the end of logic which is to realize there is only one option which offers hope even apart from the Bible. That life has a point, to believe it has a point, and to begin to seek that point. We learned you don't come to God through logic, but it is entirely logical to begin to seek God. Then we looked at the questions to ask of a non-believer and I wish someone has asked me these questions when I was locked in the mind for 30 years. The Pratney questions, the intent being to delve to the root of a person's belief system to have him discover that he is walking by faith and has always walked by faith. He just didn't know that he was walking by faith. Then we began with the most foundational revelation of God rooted in Genesis 1:1. He is set apart in Genesis 1:1 as the only uncreated thing in all of existence and the only self determined thing in all of existence. His meaning and His value come entirely from within Himself and the meaning and value of everything else that exists or ever has existed is set by the God of Genesis 1:1.

Then we looked at the origin of choice that's rooted in the love of God. Love is relational, relational requires choice. If one choice is God, any choice other than God is by definition, ungod or ungodly. And that's the same choice we face throughout our existence on planet Earth. Love, we tried to get to the root of and I came to where I walk now that love is best understood as a passion for oneness. This God of Genesis 1:1 Who created us, created us to love us and loved to create us; and thus, has an absolute passion to be one with us.

We looked at the three critical essences of God. He is the sovereign majestic creator king, He is the passionate lover, and He is a fierce, but righteous judge. And all of scripture after Genesis 1:1 will speak to one of these three essences and they must be held, understood, and kept in harmony to understand various Scriptures at different times speaking primarily to one essence of God over another essence at that particular moment.

All that is to set the stage to begin to walk into the subject for today and that is The Holiness of God. Now Holy is explained as having three different meanings. One primary meaning and two other secondary but related meanings. Holy means, "other than." "Other than" means different to an infinite extreme. It's so different that it is a word that's best understood as reserved for Deity. "Other than" anything else that exists or ever has existed. Beyond capturing fully by words, beyond capturing fully by thought; not just different by a small subtle degree, but different to some infinite extreme - anything else in all of existence. Different in fundamental quality; different to a point of being impenetrable by the human mind, cannot be captured by any frame of reference. God is simply that "other than." And He is revealed as being that "other than" by Genesis 1:1. In the beginning, this God, Who is that "other than", simply spoke creation into existence. Now if you understand Holy, in the context of that, then what can the heart reaction of any creature created by the Holy One be other than humility before that Holy God. So He is to be held, not just in respect, not just in esteem, but in absolute awe.

Now in the Old Testament, that is the attitude that the Jews attempted to hold when they wrote the name of their Lord with letters missing, or when they would leave a blank space. They were simply trying to remind themselves that this God of Genesis 1:1 Who brought this all into being is so "other than," that they wouldn't even be presumptive to speak the name or write it in full. That was to remind the Jews of their proper response before this Holy God Who is the only self determined thing in all of existence. Psalm 71:22 simply calls Him the "Holy One". Revelation 15:4 says "God alone is Holy." That states, of course, that there is a God; there is one God; that God is Holy. He alone is Holy, and we are to regard

Him as Holy, and any thought, word, or deed that you have that cannot come back to a heart response of humility before this Holy “other than” God, will be a misguided thought, word, or deed.

Now the second meaning of Holy refers to perfect purity. And that’s commonly how we use the word. Absolutely clean without spot, without blemish, just as the sacrificial lamb at the Passover was to be. Without spot or blemish in thought, in word, in deed, in motive, or in any way; the kind of purity that only God has, but that we are to pursue. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 11:44 says “be ye holy for I am Holy.” Understood, that revelation of the holiness of God is a fulfillment also of the love of God. Because if He is holy and He cannot become unholy, then for Him to fulfill His love for us, we have to progressively become holy. Repeated in I Peter 1:16 in the New Testament, “be ye holy for I am Holy.”

The third meaning of holy refers to anything called holy by the Holy One. Any item consecrated to His service, the attitude of anyone using or even looking at an item consecrated to the service of the Holy One was to be an attitude of regarding that item as holy itself. At the burning bush in Exodus 3:5, God said to Moses, “Remove your sandals, for this is holy ground.” Now that spot of ground to the human eye and the human intelligence was just another spot of ground like any other spot of ground. But it became holy as soon as the Holy One Who sets the meaning and value of everything in existence called it holy, it became holy.

Then the New Testament, I Cor. 3:16-17, we’re told that Christians (Paul is speaking to us here) “you are the temple of God.” That temple is holy; thus, you are holy. We’re to regard ourselves as holy for the Holy One called us holy. Now with that understanding of holy, we have to have all three to proceed forward.

Now, I’m going to back off from the lesson and mention parenthetically the following. Before I got saved, when Susan would try to talk to me about Christianity, my alert rational mind, thinking logically would always pick up inconsistencies. And would turn and inquire of her or any other Christian witness about the inconsistencies. And they could not be explained to me. And so I thought I was saving them from deception by trying to teach them the inconsistencies in which they were living and basing their lives. I was wrong. But I wish that they had been equipped to defend the hope that was within them. I wish that each Christian with whom I came in contact could have explained that these were apparent contradictions. So, I’m going to take this as an opportunity to speak to that particular issue. How can a rational mind in the natural man understand these three statements? God alone is Holy, you are holy, become holy. Because if God alone is Holy, I can’t be holy and if I am holy, I can’t become holy. So it is an absolute contradiction to the natural human mind. But the revelation is explained when you get these three frames of reference that are embedded in the concept of the Holiness of God. God alone is “other than.” Nothing else that has ever existed is “other than” like this “other than” God, Who spoke creation into existence. God is also perfectly pure. And God says anything that’s holy is holy. So I am holy. Well, how am I holy? I am holy because I have the imputed purity of Jesus Christ. I am holy. The Holy Spirit of God indwells me. I am holy. This body is a temple of the Holy Spirit of God and this Holy One of Genesis 1:1 called me holy. So, I’m holy by imputed purity, holy by being a temple of the Holy Spirit of God, and holy because the Holy One called me holy. Well, how can I become holy if I am holy? We’re told to work out our salvation. We’re told to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We’re told that we’re to become progressively into the image of Jesus Christ. So, that proclivity to sin that remains in the saved Christian, call it old sin nature or call it unrenewed mind, whatever you want to call it, there is a proclivity, a tendency to sin that remains in the Christian after salvation. That is to progressively become holy. So if you understand these three frames of reference about the Holiness of God, you’ll be prepared to explain to the atheistic friends with whom you come in contact that these

are not contradictions; they are apparent contradictions; because you have to know these three frames of reference. So when you understand the three, then there is no contradiction. When Scriptures in various places say God alone is Holy, you are holy, become holy. Can you follow what I'm saying? So what I'm doing in the intent of this parenthetical insertion here is to prepare you to give a defense for the hope that is within you, because my testimony of being locked in the rational mind of man for 30 years might have been opened. I can't say would have been opened, but might have been opened, had I come across a Christian witness who could have explained those things as part of defending his hope.

Now our understanding of the concept of holy as "other than" has been diluted to such a degree in Christendom as to almost lose all relevance to us. We tend to make statements like, "If God would just do this, then I would know that He loves me." Or "God must not love me because..." Well, anyone who says that doesn't have any clue about the "other thanness" of God, which also contains the "other than" love of God, that unconditional love. So God does not view it as appropriate when we view Him as anything other than "other than." Now that dilution is why we have precious little of what is called the fear of the Lord. Now the problem with not operating in the fear of the Lord, is the fear of the Lord is required to be right minded toward God; and being right minded toward God is a requirement to be right minded toward anything other than God. The fear of the Lord is at the root and the foundation of all worship. Any worship that is not rooted in the fear of this Holy God of Genesis 1:1 will be false worship. The fear of the Lord is the foundation of all proper relationship to God. Now when we do not regard God as Holy, as "other than," when we do not have the fear of the Lord, well, what's the outcome in our relationship with God? Well, there are many Scriptures that could be used; I'm going to mention two to make the point: Romans 1:21 – "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God." So the question for us as Christians, is not "do we know Him?" for we do. And the question is not "do we honor Him?" for we do. We honor Him by being here at this noon meeting to break the bread of life from His Word. The question as always is, "Do we honor Him as God?", including all that that entails. If not, then we fulfill II Timothy 3:5 – which speaks to holding a form of godliness, they have denied its power. So if we do not operate in the fear of this "other than" God of Genesis 1:1, the awe and reverence of just Who this God is, then even in our New Testament saved lives, we will have a form of godliness, but not operate in the power of it.

Now we are to only fear that which we regard as holy. Consolidate the fears. That's basically what we are told in Scripture. Cast your anxieties upon Him. Fear not; have no fear. We're to fear only one thing and that's God. And that is awe and reverence of this Holy God. We're not to fear anything else. Holy fear has two components. One is the awe and reverence; the other aspect of fear, which means dread and terror. When we have an awareness of the holy, at least transiently, we're filled with both attitudes at once. We are created in the image of God. We do have deep within us calling unto deep. We're drawn magnetically toward God. He fascinates us, compels us, attracts us, and so on. Ecclesiastes 3:11 – "he has put eternity in our hearts." Man is not created to ever have fulfillment apart from eternal concepts. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things below. If the mind is set on anything which is time limited, and that time limited concept isn't flowing out of eternal concepts, then it will be misguided. But simultaneously, we're filled with a certain dread and terror at least until we get the revelation of the grace of God. As we begin to want to approach that, which we're not sure is even approachable, and when we approach that Holy God, we are reminded of our puniness, of our finiteness, and of our vulnerability. Apart from this Holy God, we are indeed helpless and hopeless and we're helpless to change the fact that it's hopeless. But even realizing those things prepares the heart to kneel before this Holy God of Genesis 1:1.

Ambivalence, you probably know, means feeling two different ways about the same thing. There is a God and I will not know Him. Well, that's certainly fear producing. Or, there is a God and I will know Him and He will be very dissatisfied with me. That's certainly fear producing. Those are before we know the grace of God. But at least both of those fears speak to our hearts of the "other thanness" of God. They begin to heighten our reverence for this God, to crush our human pride, that exalts itself against the knowledge of God; and thus, to produce humility which is the proper heart response of man before the "other than" God of Genesis 1:1. That's to truly begin to see yourself as a created being whose only purpose is to fulfill the glory of this God Who brought you into being to begin with.

Now holy fear like that is commanded by God and is essential for spiritual growth. Otherwise verses will be memorized but the verses will not be living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword. It's only when the Word of God is regarded as true coming from this "other than" God of Genesis 1:1, that the words begin to release their power into us. That attitude toward the Holy God of the fear of the Lord is required to be right minded toward God, to approach Him in humility, and proper worship.

So we need to do what Paul told Timothy. Kindle the flame that is within you. We need to kindle the flame of holy fear of the Lord by fanning the flame of our regard for the Holiness of God - that's part of being still and know. So let's look at how regarding God as Holy actually leads to knowing God in His ways. Now, I'm going to begin this by asking a simple question. It's the question Pontius Pilate asked Jesus just before the crucifixion. What is truth? You know, we all talk about seeking truth and wanting to know truth, but I don't know that we ever agree on what is truth. Jesus didn't answer at that point, but it's answered in other ways because Psalms 119:160 tells us that the sum of thy Word is truth. So we're going to define it because we're searching for truth; so how can we search for it if we don't know what it is? So we need to define it to even establish communication among Christians. Well, to answer that question, we have to say, where do we even begin? Well, anytime that question pops up, the answer is always the same. Because God told us where to begin, because He wrote it as the first verse in the Bible so we couldn't miss it. So we would have to have help to miss where to begin. Begin with Genesis 1:1 - "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth." Now the worldly minded refuses to begin there and insists on beginning somewhere else. He begins with the Heavens and the Earth. That is to say with the physical reality. So truth for that person is simply a description, an analysis of the physical reality, known by rational thought and approached by the mind, using the scientific method. But the Christian doesn't begin there. He begins with "In the beginning, God," and stops in the middle of that sentence because you can't go on to the physical reality and have understanding if you're not living and abiding in "In the beginning, God", and coming to grips face-to-face with this God.

So since truth begins with God, then truth has to be defined in the context of God, not in the context of the physical reality. So truth, then in its most elementary definition, is what God is. And the truth about our physical reality then, is how God views that physical reality. Because it's only water so long as God wants it to be water. When he wants it to become wine, it becomes wine. So you can't have a truth about water and a truth about wine; the truth is God and how God wants it to be. So truth then, is whatever God is and however God views everything else. So with that in mind, let's begin to explain a few other words at least to grasp the concepts of these words that we use as we trace them back to this definition of truth. I'm not insisting that these are dictionary acceptable definitions; but I'm going to give definitions in order to understand the concepts of using different words that relate to truth. Truth: what God is and how God views everything else, or in short form, how God views reality, not how science views reality. Knowledge, then, becomes a tidbit of truth, a little morsel of whatever God is or however God views something else; a very focal specific aspect of truth. Understanding gives a

different dimension. It adds a second dimension that is depth to the situation. A worldly example would be a television. That is to say knowledge is to know what it is, possibly how to run it, but not have a clue about how it works. So you have no understanding. But understanding is in-depth knowledge about knowledge. It's in-depth tidbits of truth about a primary tidbit of truth. So knowledge is to know what it is, how to run it, and understanding is to know how the darn thing works. But wisdom adds another dimension. It adds a third dimension. Wisdom relates to the connectivity and usage of knowledge and understanding in proper living before a Holy God. So wisdom to the Christian becomes the godly integration and application of knowledge and understanding. That means taking every tidbit of truth, whatever depth of understanding you have about that primary tidbit of truth and seeing how it all fits together in order to apply it to please a Holy God and give him glory. So wisdom becomes not only to know it's a television, not only to know how to use it, maybe not only to know how it works, but to know how to take the television and use it to fulfill your purpose for existence, namely to bring glory to this Holy God of Genesis 1:1.

The graphic representation on the bottom is to try to give just a model example of how that can be viewed. Each larger circle contains all that's within the smaller circles and adds one more dimension to it. Knowledge, in the center, is a tidbit of truth. Understanding, wisdom, then knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, taken collectively would be my truth, that portion of truth of God's truth that I understand and have to use to his glory. But outside that is God's truth. Now in essence, that outer circle can't be drawn because we worship a transcendent God. An omniscient God; so no circle can be drawn that is finite that would capture the essence of this transcendent, omniscient God. I draw that outer circle just for graphic representation that God's truth will always transcend whatever knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that we have drawn from a portion of His truth.

Well, how do we begin that inner circle of knowledge and then progress to enlarge it into knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to come closer and closer to bringing God the fullness of glory? Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. We have to begin with God and not fast forward out of that verse, but marvel at how any Being could create the Heavens and the Earth “ex-nihilo,” meaning out of nothing. Can you just let that speak to your heart about the awesome power, the awesome intellect, the awesome creativity, the awesome wisdom of this Being of Genesis 1:1. That's the beginning of regarding God as holy, “other than,” separates God from everything else, not by a measurable degree, but to an infinite extreme. That's why we can't be bounded by thinking of Jesus Christ as just a little slightly improved man—a moral man, a good teacher. He truly is “other than” and when you regard Him that way, then you're operating in the fear of the Lord and you quit letting truth be determined by scientists; truth being determined by philosophers; truth being determined by psychologists; because truth is whatever this God is and how this God views everything else.

Well, what happens when we hold God in that kind of fear and reverence? Well, it leads to knowing God and His ways. Our God is so other than, that He can't be figured out by the mind of man. He's only known to the degree that He reveals Himself. He has revealed Himself by creation. He has revealed Himself in His written Word. He has revealed Himself by His incarnate self. But none of that could be known had He not created something to know and had He not revealed Who He is to that thing that He has created. Now, He reveals Himself to the humble. Well, that's the one to whom He gives His grace; and grace is unmerited favor. So the beginning of understanding the grace of God, which is captured in its fullest extent by the cross, begins even here in the Old Testament. When you receive the revelation of this “other than” God, that “I can't know anything of Him except He condescends to reveal Himself to me.” He is impenetrable. He is “other than.” The peanut brain cannot approach it, you see. That's to be humble in the fear of the Lord before you have an awareness of the Cross of Christ.

Because humility can be defined in different ways; but one way is humility is that condition of the inner man that is filled with the fear of the Lord. And pride is that condition of the inner man that is not filled with the fear of the Lord.

Now why is the fear of the Lord so important in the context of talking about truth? Because flowing out of the fear of the Lord, according to the Word of God, are knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and progressive revelation of the secrets of God. Proverbs 1:7 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”, so anything you have that you think is knowledge that cannot be traced to the awe and reverence of the Holy God of Genesis 1:1, is part of the knowledge of man, not the knowledge of God. Proverbs 9:10 – “knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

So you don't obtain knowledge by beginning with the science text book, you begin by obtaining understanding of the Holy One of Genesis 1:1. Also, Proverbs 9:10 – the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Psalms 25:14 – the secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him. And He, God, will make them know His covenants. So do you want to know more of the secrets of God? Do you want to have more revelation of the Holy One? Then have an awe and reverence of the Holy One. Regard Him as holy. Well, where does the fear of the Lord come from? Jer. 32:38-40 says I, God, will give them—I'll give them—a heart to fear Me for their good and the good of their children. Well, James 1:17 says “every good and perfect gift comes from above”; so the fear of the Lord is a gift. Well, the New Testament also tells us you have not because you ask not, or you ask with the wrong motive. So do we pray for the fear of the Lord? If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom and knowing the secrets of God, are we praying for the fear of the Lord? So it says I will give them (it is a gift) for *whose* good? For *their* good. The one to whom I'm speaking and the good of their children. To what end? So they will not turn away from Me. So turning away from God is simply the revelation of the fact that you do not have the fear of the Lord. You don't regard Him with awe and reverence. The fear of the Lord fulfills His love for us because when we do not turn away from Him, we turn toward Him, which the Bible talks about seeking My face. And that is to become progressively one with Him. So the fear of the Lord cannot be separated from growing in Christlikeness in the New Testament, because you will not seek to become like that which you do not regard with awe and reverence.

Also when we face this Holy God, we access His goodness. And I'll give a Scriptural reference for that in a minute. That's when we access the goodness by operating in the fear of the Lord, that's why the fear of the Lord is for our good and for the good of our children because we access the goodness of God. And what could you possibly access that would be better for you than to access the goodness of this “other than” God of Genesis 1:1? Now our flesh tends to regard God's command that He be feared as somehow selfish on His part and dominating and authoritarian. But recall that selfishness, domination and authoritarianism does not result in goodness for you. Only love brings goodness to you. Love operating in the best interest of another. So let's look at a couple of Scriptures in that regard. When we have the fear of the Lord, what is God's response? Psalms 33:18 – the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him. Yes, He loves us, but there is a special access to God by those who fear Him. We literally become the apple of his eye. In Psalms 31:19 – how great is Thy goodness which Thou has stored up. For whom? For those who fear Thee. So God's goal is not to store up His goodness, which would be selfishness. God's goal is to release His goodness and God releases His goodness to those who fear Him. So God's call for us to fear Him is not selfish; it is for our well being to access His goodness which is unselfish. Now, why can God simply not pour out all of His goodness on those who do not fear Him? Because it would be predicated on a lie. And Hebrews 6:18 tells us that God cannot lie. I'll go through this little sequence and then stop. John 4:24 – “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must

worship in spirit and in truth.” So worship of God must be in truth. Well, what is this truth that governs how we are to worship Him? Well, the truth is, He’s Holy. He’s “other than.” Isaiah 57:15 – His name is holy; and remember name in Scripture means an intrinsic quality that something is known by or known for. It’s His essence, His essential characteristic. It is what He is. The truth is He is Holy. His Holiness is not predicated on how we regard Him. That’s our response to His Holiness, but it doesn’t determine His Holiness. So if we are to worship this God in truth as we are told in the New Testament, we must regard Him as Holy, as “other than.” That’s to hold Him in awe and reverence which is to fear Him. So if we do not fear Him, not operating in awe and reverence, we’re not regarding Him as Holy and we’re not worshiping Him in truth because the truth is He is Holy. In that circumstance, our worship is not true worship because it’s based on a lie. It’s worship treating this God, honoring Him, but not honoring Him as the Holy God that He is. And a lie is evil. Habakkuk 1:13 – Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil and Thou cannot look on wickedness with favor. So, in the Old Testament, we know that God told the children of Israel, “get away from your sacrifices, don’t even bother giving them because I can see I don’t have your hearts.” So how does He know that our worship of Him is real in the New Testament? It has to be traced back and rooted in the awe and reverence of this Holy God Who condescended to give up the glory of Heaven, come to Earth as a man, go through the unspeakable horror of the cross, including “My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?” to reveal His unconditional love to us. It’s not just good love, it’s not just slightly improved love, it is an “other than” love. But it doesn’t explode into that “other than” love unless you’re rooted and grounded in the fear of the Lord, regarding Him as “other than” including all the way back to the God of Genesis 1:1, you see. Because you can’t respond that way to the Son of God if you’re not already responding that way to the holy God of Gen. 1:1.