

## The Holiness of God

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John Tobler / General

The Attributes of God / Holiness of God

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To do that, an overarching definition will be the following from John Webster:

“God's holiness is the holiness of Father, Son and Spirit, the one who bears his holy name, who is holy in all his works, and who is the Holy One in our midst, establishing, maintaining and perfecting righteous fellowship with the holy people of God.”

He is holy. Separate. Set apart. Above. Transcendent.

Again, there is no genus, species. He is above categorization and comparison. His “wholly” entire otherness. God is God and we are not. One thing- among many- Isaiah learned was that he is not God. He is a creature and fallen creature. God alone is God. God alone is holy.

2) It pervades all of the perfections and works of God, and it elevates every perfection of God.

Terry Johnson: holiness is the beauty, the harmony, the brightness, the splendour, the lustre, and varnish of the attributes, the essence of God's nature.

John Howe: Holiness “may be styled a transcendental attribute, that as it were runs through the rest, and casts glory upon every one.”

*Now to further fill out our definition.*

Yet all this, all of this good stuff we've learned will remain aloof, it will remain outside of us up there, if we don't understand and confess that the Holy One is in our midst, the Holy One dwells among us.

Only via our covenant keeping, triune Lord can we fully understand holiness and the staggering fact that the Holy God dwells with us.

Listen to Webster: It is difficult to overstress the importance of this relational character for grasping the nature of God's holiness. It is fatally easy to think of God's holiness simply as a mode of God's sheer otherness and transcendence - that is, as the opposite of relational; as concerned, not with God **with** us, but

with God **apart** from us. But to follow that path is radically to misunderstand the biblical testimony. The holiness of God is not to be identified simply as that which distances God from us; rather, God is holy precisely as the one who in majesty and freedom and sovereign power **bends down to us in mercy**. God is the Holy One. But he is the Holy One 'in your midst', as Hosea puts it ([Hos. 11.9](#)); or as Isaiah puts it: great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel' ([Isa. 12.6](#)).

Our consideration of God's holiness not only necessarily moves us into a consideration of redemptive history. But into trinitarian theology as well.

How is again, by His thrice holy self. God is Holy, Holy, Holy. The Father in election separates a people for himself. The Son in coming, "achieves the separation" and the Holy Spirit, [you guys tell me] "completes it or brings it to perfection."

Webster again: "Talk of God's holiness indicates the manner in which the sovereign God relates. As the Holy One, God passes judgement on sin and negates it. Yet the holy God does this, not from afar, as a detached legislator, but in the reconciling mission of the Son and the outpouring of the sanctifying Spirit. That is, God's destruction of sin is accomplished in his triune acts of fellowship with humanity, in which he condemns, pardons and cleanses by taking upon himself the situation of the ruined creature, in sovereign majesty exposing himself to our peril and only in that way putting an end to our unholiness. God's active opposition to sin' is thus known in the economy of salvation as a 'unity of judgement and grace'"

God's active opposition of sin. Is in distinction from his aloofness from sin. It all comes down to this. If God's holiness is confined to "God is of purer eyes to behold iniquity", then we've only said part of it. However, if we see as the Bible shows us, that the one who is "too Holy to behold iniquity", is at the same time the Holy One in our midst. If we see that our triune God in active opposition to sin; plans, accomplishes, and applies or effects the conquering of sin in his people. The overcoming of opposition to himself. Then we have a filled out view of God's holiness. And a proper basis, for striving after holiness ourselves.

*Our Holiness*