

Call to Obedience
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

Whatever Happened To Holiness?

For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.—Psalms 89:18

The Bible speaks of God as the HOLY ONE, and it tells us that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. That ought to get our attention. That ought to be a subject much preached on. Since holiness is necessary for everyone to get to heaven, therefore everybody ought to know about it.

Unfortunately many believers hate holiness more than they hate sin. They associate holiness with an outmoded, legalistic, uncompromising lifestyle. When they see the word holiness on a church building they say, "I shall never go in there." They look upon holiness as something that will restrict them, as something that will rob them of their freedom and fun. Eve made the same mistake when God put a restriction upon her, not realizing that this one restriction was the very thing that gave her the open path, the *yes* to all the blessings God had for her. In fact, in God's kingdom the *no* is frequently the door to the *yes*.

My friend, whatever negative impression you might have of "holiness people," whatever negatives come to your mind when you think about holy living, it does not take away the fact that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. 12:14).

The formula for being with Jesus at the throne of God for eternity is simple: you must be holy for God is holy. His holiness undeniably demands your holiness. There are no ifs, buts or exceptions about this. God says: *Be ye holy, for I am holy* (1 Pet.1:16).

As a matter of fact take all the attributes of God: omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, forbearance, goodness, immensity, love, mercy, justice, etc. Holiness is the chief of them. Yet this biblically most prominent attribute has been neglected in preaching, it has too often been relegated to the bottom or removed altogether. The resulting damage to the church of God will only be revealed in eternity. The neglect of holiness preaching has led to a promiscuous church with all the signs of spiritual harlotry.

Indeed holiness may not be a vital part of your theology, but it is of God's and heaven is not for those who embrace what they think, but what God thinks. The scriptures tell us that until we have met God in His holiness, we have not truly met God. There is a moral demand upon you when you come into His presence.

Now let us look at a few passages of scripture that prove that holiness is at the forefront of God's design for humanity. Let us see how God revealed this to several prominent personages throughout history.

1. Moses

God said to Moses at the burning bush, *the place whereon thou standest is holy ground* (Ex. 3:5). Moses took off his shoes and it is here that Moses' relationship with God began. Have you taken your shoes off as yet? If not your relationship with God has not as yet begun.

2. The High Priest

In Exodus the twelve tribes of Israel are consolidated into one nation under God. Here are the beginnings of the Levitical and priestly offices; here God gave Israel the laws by which they were to live holy before Him. Now when God appointed the first high priest He commanded that a crown was to be put upon his forehead: *And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD* (Ex. 28:36.)

Of all His attributes that God could have placed on the crown of the high priest: Love, peace, mercy, goodness etc., God chose HOLINESS. HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD! This is most significant. Notice that every one of those words was written in capital letters. It is like God shouting or speaking with a very loud voice. God did not want anyone to miss what is dearest, most essential in the God/man relationship. From here on it becomes incontestably obvious that man cannot meet God except on the ground of holiness. In other words, everyone should take off his shoes in holy reverence to His Lord.

3. The Prophet Isaiah

In addressing Isaiah the prophet, God is in essence addressing all prophets, indeed all of us. But Isaiah 6 is obviously nothing new, rather a refresher of what was given to the high priest earlier. Here is Isaiah's testimony:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts (Is. 6:1-5).

Again we cannot come to God except on the ground of His holiness, no matter who we are. We must come with the cry, "Woe is me..." We just cannot walk casually into

God's presence as we walk into a coffee shop or some club. God demands holiness, and it is only when He has that, that He will say to us: "Go and tell the people" (v. 9).

4. The Incarnate Son of God

In the Son of God, we of course, have all offices: priest, prophet, king and Messiah.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us the "Lord's Prayer." This masterful short prayer forms the foundation of any effective prayer you can pray. And what is the first, most essential petition? It is "hallowed be Thy name," that God's name be kept holy! If holiness is not our first and principle longing, the rest of our prayers may not be heard. If you don't want holiness more than anything, there is no guarantee that God will give you your daily needs. But if holiness is at the heart of your covenant relationship with God, you will hear Him say, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

5. The Apostle Paul

Paul said, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. 12:14).

An English preacher once asked an unbelieving attorney who had never read the Bible to read it and report back to him what he believed to be the essence of Holy Scripture. After a few weeks the attorney reported back with, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

6. The Triumphant Son of God

In the Revelation of Christ we also find the holiness of God preeminent over all of His glorious attributes. The living creatures around the throne sing only one song: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come* (Rev.4:8b). And the elders' response is, *Thou art worthy, Oh Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created* (Rev. 4:11).

The final word of our Bible on the absolute necessity of holiness is found in the last chapter of this noble book. As we see man standing at the edge of eternity, we hear these words: *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still* (Rev. 22:11).

God is the Holy One. He demands holiness of us. In the next article let us concern ourselves with the questions: How do we know what is holy and how do we become holy?

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