

## Series 1: The Character of God - Holy

Today we have become so accustomed to cell phones that we forget that we used to not have them, and not be concerned about having a call wait while we worshipped the Lord. I truly believe that we need to allow the Lord to shine His light into every area of our life so that He can adjust our priorities. Would we have our cell phones on if we were sitting with the Prime Minister of Canada, or can you imagine the utter embarrassment if we were in the audience of the Queen of England and our cell phone goes off? Would we even think of answering it – asking her to excuse you while you left the room? We are in the audience of the King or Kings and the Holy Lord of all creation...would everyone please turn off their cell phones. Thank you.

- The Holy written scriptures are the most important of all things in any sermon or study, as it is the Word from God Himself “this is a living book and not just words from history.” Any and every study should be full of the verses of the Bible, and less full of what people have to say what they think the verses say – let us allow the Holy Spirit to speak His word into our hearts and souls as we go through the many verses in this study.

### Study:

Question: If I was to ask you to describe God in just “one” word, what would it be (List them off on the board)?

- Some of you may say: merciful, or sovereign, or some other descriptive word, but most people by far will say LOVE.
- Did you know: the modern prevalent view of God being predominantly and almost exclusively a God of love comes from only 2 verses of scripture in 1 John chapter 4 – and a lot of sentimental wishing? This is the only two times in the whole Word of God where it uses the phrase “God is Love.”

- Now, do not misunderstand me, as we do not need more than one verse to teach a truth that we can stand firm on if the Bible says it. However, are we correctly interpreting each verse we quote, and presenting it correctly from the context of the passage from where it is written? We must view and interpret the Bible as a whole book, and not individual parts we can separate, and all passages must fit together, and verses must be allowed to interpret other verses, as this is the proper form of hermeneutics (interpreting scripture).

Have you ever stopped to read the context and scope of these verses we hear so often quoted on their own? If we do, the key thing we will find, is that in this chapter John's teaching is not aimed predominantly to teach us the characteristic of God – rather, he is teaching us what should be the characteristics of Christians. John's purpose is not to try and teach us the attribute of God in His central being – he is teaching us Christians what we have to be like. For we are to love – “for God is love.”

- We need to realize that in this same book it says, “God is light” (1 John 1:5), and “God is righteousness” (1 John 3:7). So, John could just as accurately say that Christians need to “be righteous, for God is righteous,” or to “be light to the world, for God is light,” or to “be just, for God is just,” and the list could go on and on with God's attributes. So why do we always only hear the one? Is this phrase being taken out of the context by some and randomly and universally spoken of to everyone without regard to the other characteristics of God, or the position of an unbeliever living in sin?

We also need to ask ourselves how these verses fit into our understanding of God's nature:

Prov. 3:32 (NIV) He (God) detests a perverse man. Or as the KJV and New American Standard states – the perverse man is an abomination.

Prov. 15:26 (KJV) “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.”

Psa. 5:5 (NKJV) “...You hate all workers of iniquity.”

Psa. 7:11 (NKJV) “...God is angry with the wicked every day.”

Jesus said in John 3:36 "...the wrath of God abideth (present tense) on him."

- only a heartbeat separates the unsaved from an eternity in the Lake of Fire.
- Did you know that Jesus speaks more about the wrath of God & judgment than He ever does about heaven.

Rom. 1:16-18 (NKJV) "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..."

- Paul starts with the wrath of God here in Romans because no man will ever see his need and understand the sacrifice of God until he sees he is under the wrath of God, AND until he sees why a sacrifice is needed, AND that only properly can be understood by correctly understanding the nature and essence of God.

Rom. 3:10-18, 23 (NKJV) "There is no one righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God...there is no one who does good, no, not one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

\*\* The most important thing about you today as you sit here, now listen carefully, the most important thing about you is what you believe God is like. If I could illicit from you what you in your heart of hearts believe the character of God is **really & truly** like, I could mostly tell you what kind of person you are like, and also have a safe prediction of your moral conduct because we move automatically by an invisible pull of what we believe God is really like.

Please turn to Proverbs 9:10 - read ("...fear of the Lord...knowledge of the Holy One...")

Hebrew poetry does not rhyme the sound of words, it rhymes the thought. It says something, then, wants to make sure you understand it and it just changes the words.

What words does the Holy Spirit through Solomon use to rhyme the meanings:

Fear = knowledge

Wisdom = understanding

**BUT** When Solomon wants to take a word that describes God – when he wants to take a word that replaces the word Lord, what word does he use?

- what is God like – what one word best describes the character and inner most being of God Himself?!

AND our generation would immediately say, love – and they would be correctly describing an attribute of God’s character, but not His complete essence.

The wisest man to ever exist, and inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, chose – **HOLY**  
Let me also read, 2 Kings 19:22 “Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?  
Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high?  
Against the **Holy** of Israel.”

(The word “One” in this verse, as in Prov. 9:10 which we just looked at, if correctly shown in your Bible is *italicized* which means that it was not in the original text – so the verse more accurately says, against the “Holy” of Israel, and this more emphatically illustrates the true being of God – His utter essence – HOLY!)

\*\* Let us allow the Bible to describe to us how God reveals Himself (Read verses):

Lev 22:32: “You shall not profane **my Holy name**, but I will be hallowed (which means treated as holy) among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you.”

- Give background – delivered from Egypt, giving of OC at Mt. Sinai, the whole book of Deut., thru wilderness to here: (**Read**) Joshua 24:15 – **19** – 25 But Joshua said to the people, vs. 19 “You cannot serve the Lord, for **He is a Holy God**. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions or sins.”

- 1 Samuel 2:2 “No one is **Holy** like our Lord, for there is none beside You, Nor is there any rock like our God.”
- Give Background – Ark was brought to the tent temple in the city of David (**Read**) 1 Chronicles 15:28 – 16:2, 16:7 – **10** – 12, “Glory in His **Holy name**; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord.”
- 1 Chronicles 29:16, “O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for **Your Holy name** is from Your hand, and is all Your own.”
- Psalm 22:1 - **3**, “But You are **Holy**, enthroned in the praises of Israel.” David was in a life full of despair and difficulties, but his strength and hope was never shaken because he knew God’s character. He expresses this again in Psa. 33:21 following.
- Psalm 33:18 – **21** – 22, “For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in **His Holy name**.”
- Psalm 89:5-7, “And the heavens shall praise your wonders, O LORD: your faithfulness also in the counsel of the holy ones. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of Yahweh can be likened unto the Yahweh? God is greatly to be feared in the counsel of the holy ones, and to be held in **reverence** (respected as Holy) by all those around him.”
- Psa 99:1– **5**, 9 “Exalt the Lord our God & worship at his footstool; **He is holy**.”

- Exod. 3:1 – 5 – 6, “Then He said, ‘Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is **holy ground.**’”
- Lev. 10:1-3, “Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the Lord by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded. So fire blazed forth from the Lord’s presence and burned them up, and they died there before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord meant when he said, **‘I will display my holiness through those who come near me.** I will display my glory before all the people.’ And Aaron was silent.”
- With everyone just listening and absorbing the scene (**Read**) Job chapter 38; then 40:1 – 5
- Isaiah 6:1-5 (Isaiah when he saw a vision of the glory of God.)
- Rev. 1:10-18 (John seeing the risen and glorified Jesus Christ.)

I would like to read these couple passages from the booklet “The holiness of God” by Arthur W Pink, which is one of the many tracts I have, and anyone may have a copy if they would like to read the entirety.

- Read sections from Pink’s pamphlet (Appendix **A**).

HOLD UP THE BIBLE – How does God describe Himself in this book?

- The evidence is overwhelming that He is described as **HOLY.**

## Here is a list of 9 important things you will find on the character of God as you study the entire Bible:

1) Not one single time in worship or praise or petition by men or angels or devils is God “addressed” as love (God being announced or declared by another. i.e. The Loving God declares; The Loving One of Israel; Our Loving King; etc).

- NEVER one time is He addressed as love or loving in the WHOLE word of God.

2) In the Book of Acts we see all examples of the church ordained by God preaching and witnessing and speaking to heathens.

- Let’s read through the sections so that we get a clear picture of how the Holy Spirit inspired the early church people to preach and speak the truth (**Read**):
  - Acts 2:14-39 preached truth and fact to all the unsaved.
    - Acts 2:40-47 How did the believers live, and were strengthened?
  - Acts 3:11-26 preached to all the people in the temple after the healing.
  - Acts 4:8-12 preached to the rulers when they were in custody.
  - Acts 7:2-60 Stephen preaches to council & people after accusing him.
    - Message was used by God to sear this impression in mind of Paul.
  - Acts 13:14-41 Paul speaks to the people in a synagogue in Antioch.
    - Afterwards the Jews envy/reject – but the Gentiles beg for more.
  - Acts 17:19-34 Paul preaches on Mars hill to all the Greek philosophers.
  - Acts 22:1-22 When arrested Paul asked to speak to the Jewish crowds.
  - Acts 24:10-21 Paul speaks to Felix defending against Jewish accusers.

- Acts 26:2-29 Paul's defense before King Agrippa and Festus.
- Acts 28:17-29 Paul in Rome preaches to the Jews then pronounces judgment on them and that the gospel is turning to the Gentiles.

The above are a listing of all the sermons/preaching in the book of Acts:

- Not one time is love used as a theme of any message.
- And actually, not one time in any of the "sermons" in the book of Acts is the word love even used.
- In fact, and you can go and look this up – not one time in the "entire book of Acts" is the word love ever used.

\*\* Here is the only church preaching in the New Testament, and the history recorded and inspired by God for all the ages – and not once is the word love used.

- Please do not misunderstand what I am saying, but this should give us an idea of how far off many churches and professing believer's evangelistic messages are today.

3) Do a wonderful study some time and study the names that God used to describe His character.

- Look at all of the many adjectives He uses to describe Himself: Consuming Fire (Deut. 4:24, 9:3; Psa. 18:8; Isa. 30:27; Heb. 12:29), Wonderful counselor (Isa. 9:6), Our Guide (Psa. 48:14), Our Peace (Eph. 2:14), My Stronghold (Psa. 18:2, 43:2, 66:2-6, 144:2; 2 Sam. 22:2-3; Jer. 16:19), King of Kings (1 Tim. 6:15; Dan. 2:37; Rev. 17:14, 19:16), and so many other.



**\*\* Never one time** in the Bible did God take the word love and incorporate it into His name and say “I the Lord am a loving God,” BUT it does say again and again – I the Lord God am a HOLY God. Please do not misunderstand me, as the purpose of this study is absolutely not trying to say God is not love, but the purpose of this study is to try and allow the scriptures to properly put into place what that means, and to whom and how, and under what conditions does God tell us this.

4) In the Old Testament the Lord was very, very specific in the details of how to build the earthly tabernacle where He would dwell with His people. The Two most significant places in that temple were called the “Holy place” and the “Most Holy place.”

- If that is where God dwelt, and that is where He made His name to dwell, and if His name is simply Love and His character is simply loving then why is it not called the loving place and the most loving place – because He who dwelt there is HOLY!
- Never does He say my name is love, never does He say make known my name is love, but we can read so many Psalms and see how often they proclaim to “make known His holy name:”

You will find this over and over again:

- rejoice to His holy name.
- give thanks to His holy name.
- trust in His holy name.

Let’s turn to Psalm 99 as just one example: never once mentioned love, but three times in a small Psalm --- He is Holy! (vs. 3, 5, 9)

Over and over again His description is Holy – never once is the description love. Faithful, Merciful, Just and others, but overwhelmingly predominant is HOLY.

- Moses was told the ground he stood on was Holy ground (Exod. 3:5).
- 31 times in the book of Isaiah alone God calls Himself the “Holy One of Israel.” That is one of His favorite names.
- In the book of Leviticus uses 87 times the word Holy.

5) **Every single time** in scripture when God touches a place, a person, a thing, a day, a utensil, a garment – no matter what it is – he always – **without a single exception**, He prefixes it with the word Holy.

\*\* You can put the word **holy** in front of every single attribute He has, but you cannot do that with love.

- If you start with thinking His essence is **love** many things will not make sense:

- Faithfulness – it is a loving faithfulness
- Love – it is a loving love – it does not make sense
- Wrath – it is a loving wrath – that is impossible

- However, the Bible will start to make sense if you understand His essence is **Holy**:

- Faithfulness – it is a Holy faithfulness
- Love – it is a Holy love
- Wrath – it is a Holy wrath

6) Turn to Psalm 145:17 “...Holy in all His works.”

In this verse the King James gives the most accurate translation as Holy. Some translations, including the NKJV substitute the word Gracious or even other less accurate words, but the Hebrew word is “Khaw-seed.” Religiously pious (a saint): godly, good, holy (one).

- You can not only put the word Holy in front of every characteristic or name of God, but you can also in front of every Act He has ever done.
- When He brought the terrible flood upon the earth. When He reigned down fire and brimstone on Sodom & Gomorrah. The great Plagues in Egypt and we could go on.
- You could never describe these as loving acts, but they are acts of His holiness.

- Sadly to say, so many churches professing Christendom are misleading multitudes, and the world mocks them and their God, because they have been told that God is simply love, and that He is the ruler of the world, and they say since He is love, and can do whatever He wants to do – why doesn't He?

- If your basis is on the premise that God's essence is simply love you will never be able to answer that. God will continue to be degraded and belittled.

(This is what it means by “taking the Lord's name in vain – misrepresenting Him”)

\*\*God forbid! He is HOLY! He does what He does because He is holy.

## 7) How do those closest to God address Him?

If you were invited to a sitting with the Queen of England – would you not find out from an Englishman or someone who has met with her to find out how you should address her?!

Or if you turned around and in that back door the Prime Minister of Canada walked in – would you remain seated? Would you call him by his first name?

\*\* How do the beings in heaven, who are in the presence of God 24 hours a day address Him? Do they not say HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord God Almighty! (Rev 4:8)

- If every time you think of God you think of wrath – you have a monster on your hands.
- My brothers and sisters, if every time you think of God you think of sentimental love – you also have a monster on your hand – He just has a different shaped head.

8) Our Lord Jesus addressed His Father as Holy Father, and He addressed Him as righteous Father.

9) The thing that has convinced me above all others that God is a God of holiness first and foremost, and not to simply describe Him as love – an irrefutable proclamation from God Himself of Himself – is the name He has chosen for Himself – Holy Spirit!!

- The Spirit is not only the very essence of God – He is God Himself. If He is the nature of God and the essence of God, and Being of God – God Himself – why is He never one time called “the Loving Spirit,” or “the Spirit of Love?”

Who is He – He is the **Holy** Spirit!! Why, because God is Holy!

\*\* When God chooses to swear by whom He is, what does He say, Psa. 89:35, “...sworn by My **holiness**.” The most emphatic and descriptive thing He can say.

\*\* We can never properly understand the Christian faith until we understand that God is holy. That’s why He has wrath, and that is why we are under His wrath, because He is Holy, and we are sinful. And that is why the cross of Jesus Christ was so necessary (explain how holiness requires perfection, and Christ was perfect, and how the Father made Him sin and could not look at Him upon the cross because His holiness is pure and He had to have a pure sacrifice to take the place of us and all of our sins).

\*\* Then once our sin has been removed from us through faith in Christ → then we can fully and richly experience His pure, righteous, holy love.

(Satan in the Garden of Eden thought he had won when he deceived Adam and Eve to sin, because he knew God was Holy and he thought he had broken that relationship between man and God forever.)

\*\* (See Appendix **B**) (*Attributes of God* by Arthur W. Pink, pg. 43, “The Holiness of God”)

Someone may say to me that I have this all wrong and that people need to hear about the Love of God. And I so agree, but it is the LOVE of GOD and not the LOVE of LOVE that they need to hear about. It is the almighty God of the universe who loves me, not some sentimental love. The Creator of this universe, the God who spoke...and it was, the Giver of the 10 commandments – the Ruler of all the heavens and earth – it is that God who loved me, and He loved me so much that He punished my sins on His only begotten Son.

You see, when we begin to see more clearly how God is Holy in the essence of His character, and then we read “for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” it now has even more of a powerful and beautiful meaning.

- It is so important that we understand who God is, and preach His holiness and wrath correctly, so that when we proclaim the love of God to people it will represent truth, and what is truth – Jesus Christ.

Question: what do you do when tragedy comes, an incurable disease, or a child dies...what do you do? If you start in your understanding with God is simply love it will not be long before you are asking “if He loves me why does He let this happen?” But begin with holiness, and come to understand His absolute sovereignty, and your faith and understanding of the Bible will take on new power and yearning.

- Look at the cross – look at the mocking of the crowds asking Jesus where His God was – where was He – He was where He always is – on His throne carrying out His sovereign will. (Acts 2:23)
- Look at the death of Stephan. Where was God when they stoned His child to death? (Acts 7:51-59)
  - You know where He was – he was burning that image of the look on Stephan’s face into Paul to later use it to bring him to repentance.

You see, if we are a Christian and correctly understand God’s holiness and His sovereignty, we can be sure that in spite of any of the trials in life we may face, God is for us and with us, and He will work in all things for the good “according to His purposes,” even if we may not fully understand it at the time (Romans 8:28 as well as other verses tell us this). We have this to hold onto through anything that may come our way.