

Holiness and Worship

Remember in the bible, when God told the Israelites “Be holy, for I am Holy” ? He had a reason for saying this, and one of those reasons is worship. There are several reasons for the importance of holiness, and how that relates to worship, and we will look at some of them now.

First off, God hates sin. He cannot tolerate it, nor be engaged with it. When we as Christians refuse to be separated from the world, we are in effect telling God “Nah, I don’t need you. I like {insert sin here}”. Therefore, when we pollute ourselves with worldly things, we separate ourselves from fellowship with God, and from any type of worship.

To illustrate this point, think of a man who is allergic to dogs. If you decide you do not want him coming around and hanging out at your house, all that you really need to do is to get a couple of Schnauzers, let them rub all over your furniture, and voila! He will not be coming around anymore. Unfortunately, this concept also works if you like having the man around, but are unwilling to get rid of the dogs. It becomes a question of which relationship is more important. A choice is mandated by the situation.

Secondly, holiness is in and of itself, a form of worship. God seems in scripture to be far more concerned with our right actions than he is with “song singing and hand clapping”. When we live according to the precepts that God has set forth, we are expressing ourselves in the ultimate form of worship; obedience.

Christ demonstrated this fact, when he spoke of two sons in a parable. In the story, the father gave a task to his two sons. One of them said “I will not go”, but later recognized his disobedience was wrong, and obeyed his father. The other said “I go”, but did not go. Their words were inconsequential; it was their actions that were important. So it is with worship. God is not impressed with long winded prayers, or well sung songs, absent of a heart of obedience.

The last aspect of the importance of holiness in worship that we will be discussing here is its effect on our fellowshiping, and joining with other Christians to worship as a group.

Just as our sin and unrighteousness separate us from God, so it also separates us from a relationship with Godly people. Nothing can drive a wedge into the heart of a congregation like unconfessed sin. A man within the congregation is leading a double life, and this spills out in his attitude towards others. When his type of sin is brought up within the course of a sermon or discussion, it brings about feelings of doubt, anger, resentment and guilt. This causes him to avoid other Christians, and ultimately cuts him off from group worship as well.

These concepts can easily be seen within the context of the Old Testament. When the High Priest entered the Holy of holies, he was required to first ritually cleanse himself through blood. This is only one example of holiness in worship, as the idea of worshipping “clean” is an idea found throughout Leviticus. Without holiness, worship was simply empty ritual.

As Christians, Jesus Christ is our “Sacrificial Cleansing”, and his death on the cross allows us the ability to worship and come into the presence of God. However, this same type of “empty worship” is found in Church’s today, where holiness and being separate from the world is not emphasized.

Therefore let all of our worship be done, with a clean and righteous heart “blameless before God”.