




GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#166)
God's holiness – a serious matter!


People fail to grasp the seriousness of God's holiness.



THE SINFUL MIND

① **Our minds are clouded by our sin.**

⇒ When we're exposed to God's holiness, we don't like what we see. We may even view it as "negative," because it clashes with our sinfulness.



BEING RENEWED

② **Even when we want to see things right, it's difficult.**

⇒ We have a lot of sin's influences to undo – and attaining right thinking is a growing process.

But **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.


... be transformed by the **renewing** of your mind ...

... **growing** in the knowledge of God, ...

2 Peter 3:18a; Romans 12:2b; Colossians 1:10b (CSB)

③ **A one-sided focus may also make it difficult.**

⇒ We may be so focused on *one* aspect of the truth, that we fail to see *other* aspects (whether accidentally or deliberately).



EXAMPLE:

We may be so focused on the effects of what Jesus did for us (i.e., the benefits we experience), that we overlook the significance of what he did (i.e., to deal with God's wrath).

- All those verses about God's wrath against sin may be unpleasant... but they're real. Jesus did not cancel that wrath; rather, he experienced it – in behalf of those who would become his followers.
- Those who are unwilling to pursue God's holiness (= unwilling to follow Jesus) will someday experience that wrath themselves.

[Jesus] treads the winepress of the fury of the **wrath** of God Almighty.

Revelation 19:15b (NIV)

HOW SERIOUS IS IT? THE OLD TESTAMENT SHOWS US.


The Old Covenant religious activities were necessary for dealing with the people's lack of holiness.

- ❖ **TO US**, those activities are "pictures" of heavenly realities, and of what Christ Jesus would accomplish.
- ❖ **TO THEM**, the activities dealt with real earthly matters, related to God's justice, and one's interaction with the holy God.

Some of those practices provided for the delay of deserved wrath for sin. (Sin is an affront to God's holiness and glory. It is a defiant act of rebellion, and needs punished.)


God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, **because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished** ...

Romans 3:25 (NIV)



GOD HAS ACCEPTED MY SACRIFICE! HE HAS **NOT** Poured OUT HIS WRATH ON ME!

NO WRATH? WHERE IS JUSTICE?



THERE IS JUSTICE!

DELAYED! JUSTICE PAID!

Today, we are no longer under obligation to perform the Old Covenant religious activities.

But God himself has NOT changed!

- The God who judged the wicked in the past is the same God who promises an eternal judgment in the future.
- We should view those past events as warnings for us.

THE PAST (PROVIDES EXAMPLES THAT ARE WARNINGS FOR US).

... Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns ... serve as **an example** of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

Jude 1:7 (NIV)

THE PRESENT (UNREPENTANT PEOPLE CAN EXPECT A WORSE JUDGMENT).

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of **judgment** and of **raging fire** that will consume the enemies of God.

Hebrews 10:26-27 (NIV)

In contrast... **Jesus has changed... TWICE!**

Before he came to be born in Bethlehem, he shared the glory of God with the Father.

Before he died on the cross, he prayed: And now, Father, **glorify** me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.
John 17:5 (ESV)

This is about the glory he originally had: The Son is the radiance of God's **glory** and the exact representation of his being,
Hebrews 1:3a (NIV)

- This was the same glory that was present in the temple – the glory that would cause people to die, if they looked at it. (Isaiah was an exception to the rule.)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord ...
Isaiah ... saw Jesus' **glory** and spoke about him.
Isaiah 6:1; John 12:41 (NIV), referring to that event in Isaiah 6.

When he came to earth, he put aside his glory. He looked like a typical human, and died the way the worst of criminals would.

Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself **nothing** by taking the very nature of a **servant**, being made in **human likeness**. And being found in appearance as a **man**, he **humbled** himself by becoming obedient to **death**— even death on a **cross!**
Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV)

... he was despised, and **we didn't value him.**
Isaiah 53:3b (CSB)

Today, we tend to have a "harmless" view of who Jesus is...

- A typical human living among humans (secretly God), hiding his glory.
- Basically we view Jesus the way he may have looked before he was killed.

He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.
John 1:10 (CSB)

But today, Jesus is nothing like that!

- His **glory** has returned! If we saw him today – without our sin being totally removed – it would terrify us. Even Jesus' closest friend (John) was terrified!

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead.
Revelation 1:17a (NLT)

It's only by the GRACE that brings HOLINESS that a person can survive!

He has saved us and called us to a **holy** life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and **grace.**
2 Timothy 1:9a (NIV)

GOD REMAINS THE SAME HOLY GOD!

★ **JESUS DIDN'T CHANGE GOD... He changed us.** ★
He changed our ability to survive in God's presence.

Under the Old Covenant – People who were in God's presence, yet violated his holiness, often died immediately.

Under the New Covenant – Death is delayed – and it gives us an opportunity to repent and not die.

Since God's **glory** is not present the way it was in the tabernacle and in the first temple, this judgment won't happen until Jesus returns in his **glory.**

Those who do not obey the Good News (v. 8):

They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the **glory** of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his **holy** people ...
2 Thessalonians 1:9-10a (NIV)

★ **THERE IS MUCH TO LEARN FROM THOSE OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES THAT PEOPLE TEND TO DISLIKE.** ★

Don't be like the wicked, who criticize God, because he doesn't do things the way they want!

These things [that happened to Israel] happened as a **warning to us**, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did. ... And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, ... Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them ... And don't grumble as some of them did, ... These things happened to them as **examples for us.** They were written down **to warn us** who live at the end of the age.
1 Corinthians 10:6-7a, 8a, 9a, 10a, 11 (NLT)

Even though we might not understand some of the Old Testament examples, there are many that include explanations.

EXAMPLE: Nadab and Abihu.

When it came for Aaron and his sons to be consecrated as priests, God warned them that it was a serious matter. The instructions had to be precisely followed, in order to keep them from dying.

You must stay at the entrance to the tent of meeting day and night for seven days and do what the Lord requires, so you will not die ...

Leviticus 8:35a (NIV)

Unfortunately, Nadab and Abihu got careless about following God's instructions.

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his own firepan, put fire in it, placed incense on it, and presented unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them to do.

Leviticus 10:1 (CSB)

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Nadab and Abihu did not follow God's instructions ... and what God warned them would happen ... *did* happen.



Then fire came from the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

Leviticus 10:2 (CSB)

What was the issue? It had to do with holiness.

Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has spoken: I will demonstrate my **holiness** to those who are near me, and I will reveal my glory before all the people."

Leviticus 10:3 (CSB)

= A WARNING about carelessness.
Such an attitude is incompatible with holiness.

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EXAMPLE: Uzzah.

The ark of the covenant was the holy place where God would meet with people. If it needed to be moved, God gave specific instructions that would enable them to move it without dying.

- Only the sons of Kohath (a Levite clan) could move it (Numbers 4:4+).
- Specific coverings had to be put over it, so it couldn't be seen. Anyone who looked at it would die (Numbers 4:20).
- It had to be carried by poles attached through rings. Anyone who touched it would die (Numbers 4:15).

Why did God give these instructions? Because he wanted them to live!

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Do not let the Kohathite clans be destroyed from among the Levites! This is what you must do so they will live and not die when they approach the most **sacred** [holy] objects. ..."

Numbers 4:17-19a (NLT)

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What was so special about the ark?
IT WAS ...

... the Ark of God, which bears the name of the LORD who is enthroned between the cherubim.

1 Chronicles 13:6b (NLT)

(The cherubim are located on top of the ark.)

They did not follow God's instructions ... and what God warned them would happen ... *did* happen.



They placed the Ark of God on a new cart ... the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the Ark. Then the LORD's anger was aroused against Uzzah, and he struck him dead because he had laid his hand on the Ark. So Uzzah died there in the presence of God.

1 Chronicles 13:7a, 9b-10 (NLT)

= A WARNING about compromise.
One compromise in holiness can easily lead to another.

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... God struck him down there because of his error, ...

2 Samuel 6:7b (ESV)

His error may have been unintentional; but the entire event had already been compromised by previous error – reflecting a sinful attitude toward what was sacred.

Later, when they obeyed God's instructions, they successfully moved the ark... and nobody died.

"Because you Levites did not carry the Ark the first time, the anger of the LORD our God burst out against us. We failed to ask God how to move it properly."

So the priests and the Levites purified themselves in order to bring the Ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to Jerusalem.

Then the Levites carried the Ark of God on their shoulders with its carrying poles, just as the LORD had instructed Moses.

1 Chronicles 5:13-15 (NLT)

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EXAMPLE: Moses and Aaron.

- ✓ Israel complained (again) about water – even though God had continually provided for them throughout their journey.
- ✓ God gave Moses specific instructions...

Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.

Numbers 20:8b (NIV)

- ✓ What did Moses do?

Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted [to the people]. "Must we bring you water from this rock?"

Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So the entire community and their livestock drank their fill.

Numbers 20:10-11 (NLT)

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There are **consequences** to sin, even when God is not physically present.

They* did not follow God's instructions ... and learned that there are consequences for disobedience.

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But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you* did not trust me enough to demonstrate my **holiness** to the people of Israel, you* will not lead them into the land I am giving them!"

This place was known as the waters of Meribah (which means "arguing") because there the people of Israel argued with the LORD, and there he demonstrated his **holiness** among them.

Numbers 20:12-13 (NLT)

* ["You" is plural. The attitude was shared by both. Both would receive the same judgment (Numbers 20:22-29 and Deuteronomy 34).]

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What were the heart issues behind this disobedience?

This matter was a lot more serious than we tend to think! It was rebellion, an unwillingness to trust God, and failure to treat him as holy.

"... you **did not trust** me enough to demonstrate my **holiness** to the people of Israel..."

Numbers 20:12b (NLT)

"When the community quarreled in the Wilderness of Zin, both of you **rebelled against my command** to demonstrate my **holiness** in their sight at the waters."

Numbers 27:14a (CSB)

For both of you **broke faith with me** among the Israelites at the Waters of Meribath-kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin by **failing to treat me as holy** in their presence.

Deuteronomy 32:51 (CSB)

= A WARNING about using sinful methods to accomplish good things.

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EXAMPLE: The people at Beth Shemesh.

- ✓ There was war with the Philistines. The Israelites took the ark into the battle, as though it were a "good luck" charm... and it was captured by the Philistines.
- ✓ God punished the Philistines, and eventually they returned the ark to Israel. (This event is recorded in 1 Samuel 4-6.)

=====

- ✓ Presumably, the ark was covered (though nothing is mentioned in the text). We've already seen that *touching* the ark, or even *looking* at it, would be fatal, because it was...

... the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim.

1 Samuel 4:4b (NIV)

- ✓ But the people of Beth Shemesh didn't pay attention to God's instructions. (Like most of the people in Israel, they *ignored* God and his Word; so they did not know what it said.)

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They did not follow God's instructions ... and what God warned them would happen ... *did* happen.

↓

God struck down the people of Beth-shemesh because they looked inside the ark of the LORD. He struck down seventy persons. The people mourned because the LORD struck them with a great slaughter.

The people of Beth-shemesh asked, "Who is able to stand in the presence of the LORD this **holy** God?"

1 Samuel 6:19a, 20a (CSB)

- ✓ People died – just as God had warned them would happen.
- ✓ The survivors recognized that the matter had to do with **holiness**.

= A WARNING about ignoring things we have an obligation to know.

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This week's mission!

UNDERSTAND THAT HOLINESS IS A SERIOUS MATTER!

Israel learned that God's judgment against sin is an expression of his **holiness**.

... they defiled my **holy** name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger.

Ezekiel 43:8b (NIV)

Those who take God's holiness **seriously** (and repent of their sin against him) are offered something better.

... I will live among them forever.

Ezekiel 43:9b (NIV)

Today, we understand that this offer was made possible through Christ's death and resurrection!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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