

HOLINESS

By Brother Michael Burnham

[This lesson on holiness was prepared by Brother Mike Burnham, now with the Lord.

I have edited the lesson by adding the written scripture references – Leon King]

When the bible calls God *holy* it means primarily that God is transcendently separate. He is so *far above and beyond us* that he seems almost totally foreign to us (Isa. 40:18, 25).

Isaiah 40:18 *To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?*

Isaiah 40:25 *To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*

There is no category that he can be put in. To be *holy* is to be *different in a special way*. The same basic meaning is used when the word *holy* is applied to earthly things. Ezek. 22:26, 44:23; Lev. 10:10.

Ezekiel 22:26 *Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.*

Ezekiel 44:23 *And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*

Leviticus 10:10 *And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;*

There is: holy ground, holy Sabbath, holy convocation, holy nation, holy place, holy linen coat, holy house, holy tithe, holy censers, holy bread, holy covenant, holy anointing oil, holy jubilee, holy field,

holy ark, holy city, holy word, holy of holies, holy child, holy ones (saints), etc. This is, by no means, a complete list, but it shows us that the word holy is applied to all sorts of things besides God. In every case the word holy is used to *express something other than a moral or ethical quality, (purity)*. The things that are holy are things that are set apart, separated from the rest. They have been consecrated, *separated from the commonplace*, unto the Lord and to his service. They are different in a special way.

None of the things in the list is *holy in itself*. To become holy, they must first be consecrated, or "*sanctified*" by God. God alone is holy in Himself (Rev. 15:4).

Revelation 15:4 *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*

Only God can sanctify something else. Only God can put the touch on something that changes it from the commonplace to something *special, different, and apart*, because only God is holy (Rev. 15:4; 1 Sam. 2:2).

1 Samuel 2:2 *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*

Whatever is holy has been *separated from common use*. It may not be *touched*; it may not be *eaten*; it may not be used for *common matters*. It is *special*, it is *holy*, Exo. 30:34-38.

Exodus 30:34-38 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto*

you most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

Where does *purity* come in? When things are made holy, when they are consecrated, they are set apart unto *purity*. They are to be used in a *pure way*. Purity is not excluded from the idea of the holy; it is contained *within* it. But the idea of the holy is never exhausted by the idea of purity.

Holiness is the *beauty of God* (2 Chron. 20:21, Psa. 27:4).

2 Chronicles 20:21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Holiness or purity is the *splendor of God* (Hab. 3:3,4).

Habakkuk 3:3-4 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

Holiness casts luster upon all his attributes, they would not be beautiful without holiness to adorn them. Holiness is pleasing to the eye of faith because it makes his love *pure*, his mercy *tender*, his

kindness *loving*, his justice *righteous*, etc. Justice and righteousness are manifestations of holiness. (Psa 47:8, 97:2).

Psalms 47:8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

Psalms 97:2 Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Righteousness demands from all moral beings conformity to the moral perfection of God, and *justice* visit's non-conformity to that perfection with judgment. He considers us *beautiful* when we worship him in holiness. (1 Chron. 16:29).

1 Chronicles 16:29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

The first song in the Bible and the last song of the Bible exalt the *Holiness* of God. In Exodus 15, God is described as glorious (majestic) in *holiness*, v-11; and in the last song, Rev. 15:3-4, the saints sing because "*you alone are holy.*"

Exodus 15:11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Revelation 15:3-4 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

The only two instances recorded in scripture where men are permitted to see in the throne room of heaven and view God in the

fullness of his glory, they hear angelic beings singing continuously "Holy, Holy, Holy" is the Lord (Isa. 6:1-3; Rev. 4:8).

Isaiah 6:1-3 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.

Revelation 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Unless we understand holiness, some passages in the bible are impossible to understand or else they appear unjust. Let's look at some passages in the New Testament that are hard to understand and some in the Old Testament that some find offensive and appear to be unjust.

Mark 4:35-40. *And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*

Here, we have an event that made a special impression on the disciples. Jesus controlled the fierce forces of nature by the sound of

his voice. He uttered a command and instantly nature obeyed. The wind heard the voice of its creator and ceased and the sea recognized the command of its Lord and became like glass.

Notice the reaction of the disciples in verse 41. That the storm and raging sea frightened them is understandable. But once the danger passed and the sea was calm, it would seem that their fear would vanish as suddenly as the storm. It didn't happen that way. Now that the sea was calm, the fear of the disciples "*increased.*" How do we account for that?

They cried out, "*what manner of man is this?*" or "what 'kind' of man is this?" They were looking for a category to put Jesus in, a type that they were familiar with. If we can classify people into certain types, we know how to deal with them. We *respond* one way to hostile people and another way to friendly people. But they could not find a category adequate for Jesus. He was beyond typecasting. He was in a class by himself. They had never met a *holy* man, a man who could speak to the winds and waves and have them obey him. Jesus was *different*. He possessed an *awesome difference*. He made them uncomfortable. He was infinitely above and beyond anyone they had ever seen or heard of.

Luke 5:1-7. *And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.*

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

Peter was tired. He had been up all night and was frustrated by the lack of success in his fishing. When Jesus finished speaking, Peter was ready to go home and go to bed. Instead Jesus wanted to go fishing. You can imagine the frustration Peter felt. But no sooner had Peter dropped the nets where Jesus told him than it seemed as if every fish in the Sea of Galilee jumped into them.

Notice Peter's reaction in verse 8. He became desperately uncomfortable. His initial response was one of worship; he fell to his knees before Christ. Instead of saying something like "Lord I adore thee, I magnify thee," he said, "Please go away. Please leave."

The history of the life of Christ is a history of multitudes of people pushing through crowds just to get close to him. But not Peter, why? Peter recognized that he was in the presence of the *Holy Incarnation* and right away, he saw himself a sinful man. The *transcendent standard* of all righteousness and all purity stood before his eyes. Like Isaiah before him, Peter was undone. All illusions of righteousness vanish in the presence of *holiness*.

Why did the multitudes scream for Jesus' blood? Why did the Pharisees hate him? Why was such a nice, moral, upright fellow condemned to death by the highest religious court in the land? Because He was *different*. He was *holy*.

Leviticus 10:1-3 *And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and*

devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

Many think that God was extreme in his judgment upon Nadab and Abihu. The Lord reminded Aaron the original consecration of the priests. They had been set apart for a sacred task and solemnly charged with the precise requirements of their office. They had the privilege of ministering before a *Holy God*. Each vessel in the tabernacle was made to precise specifications and each item was sanctified by elaborate measures commanded by God. They were *holy unto the Lord*.

With respect to the Altar of Incense, Aaron and his sons were specifically instructed in the proper procedures (Exodus 30:9, 10). The instructions had been clear. The Altar of Incense was declared by God to be "Most Holy." When Nadab and Abihu offered *strange* or *unauthorized* fire upon it, they were acting in clear defiance of God. It was an act of blatant *rebellion*, showing no respect for God and what he had *set apart*. *Holiness* to them meant nothing. They profaned that which was *holy* (Ezk. 22:16).

God's judgment was swift. In verse 3 "*Aaron remained silent.*" What else could he do? He held his peace. He could think of no excuse to offer; no protest to make.

Was this punishment cruel and unusual? If we struggle with the story of Nadab and Abihu, we meet even great difficulty with the story of Uzzah. When the *Ark of the Covenant* was returned by the Philistines it was placed in safekeeping. Now David wanted the Ark back and placed in a position of prominence in the midst of the nation (1 Chron. 13:3,4). The Ark was the rallying point for the nation; the

sacred seat of the *Most High*. It was the throne of God. It was to be housed in the *Holy of Holies*.

1 Chronicles 13:7-11 *And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perezuzza to this day.*

Even more than the case of Nadab and Abihu, the execution of Uzzah stirs protests from readers who have been taught that God is a God of *love* and *kindness*. The bible says of God he is *longsuffering* and *slow to anger*. But it sure didn't take his anger long to reach the boiling point with Uzzah. He touched the Ark and Wham!

Surely Uzzah's reaction was instinctive. He did what any pious Jew would do to keep the Ark from falling in the mud. He reached out his hand to steady the ark, to protect the *holy object* from falling. It was not a premeditated act of defiance toward God. It was a reflex action. From our vantage point it seems like he did the right thing. What was Uzzah's sin? To answer this question we must look back in Jewish history to the formation of the priesthood and the special commands that God had given them. All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. A special *family branch* of the Levites were the clan of Kohathites. The Kohathites were consecrated by God to a highly specialized task. They were trained for one basic job---to take care of the sacred articles of the tabernacle. (Numbers 4:4,15-20)

Uzzah was a Kohathite. He knew exactly what his duties were. He understood that God had declared that the *touching* of the Ark of the Covenant was a capital offense. No Kohathite, under any circumstance, was ever permitted to *touch* the ark. No emergency was grounds for breaking the inviolate command. Only the poles could be *touched* by man and inserted into the rings for purposes of transport. Then it was the task of the Kohathites to carry the Ark by these poles. No provision was made for hurrying the procedure by transporting the Ark by an ox-cart. What was the Ark doing on an ox-cart in the first place? (1 Chr. 15:12-15).

Was his act right? No! It was an act of arrogance, a sin of presumption. Uzzah assumed that his hand was less polluted than the earth. But it wasn't the ground or the mud that would desecrate the Ark. It was the *touch of man*. The earth is an obedient creature. It does what God tells it to do. There is nothing polluted about the ground.

God didn't want his Holy Throne touched by that which was contaminated by evil, that which was in rebellion to him. It was man's touch that was forbidden. Uzzah was not an innocent man. He was not punished without a warning. He was not punished without violating a law. There was nothing arbitrary or whimsical about what God did in that moment. That which is holy is not to be taken lightly by man, because God does not take *holiness* lightly.

What God does is always consistent with who God is. He always acts according to his *holy character*. As a Holy God, absolutely pure, he is utterly *incapable* of an unholy act.

God does not always act with *justice*. Sometimes he acts with *mercy*. Mercy is not *justice*, but neither is it *injustice*. We may see non-justice in God, which is *mercy*, but we never see *injustice* in God. Most people have trouble with passages like these because we do not

understand the meanings of *holiness, justice, grace, and mercy*, in their biblical concepts.

Justice in the bible refers to a *conformity* to a rule or a norm. The ultimate norm of justice is his own *holy character*. He is the model or pattern man is to conform to. The bible clearly teaches that God is the Supreme Judge of the universe. When man acts in nonconformity he sins and must be judged. All sin of unbelievers will ultimately be judged (Rev. 20:11-15). The sins of believers have been *judged* already, being laid upon Jesus Christ, He receiving the *justice* believers deserved.

We know that earthly judges can be corrupt. They take bribes; they show partiality; at times they act from ignorance. They make mistakes. Not so with God. There is no corruption in him. No one can bribe him. He refuses to show partiality. He is no respecter of persons. He never acts out of ignorance. He does not make mistakes. God's judgment is always just, always righteous.

Grace by definition is undeserved. *Mercy* is never an obligation. He reminds us more than once, "*if by grace, then it is no more of works.*" "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.*" *Mercy and grace* must be *voluntary* or they are no longer *mercy and grace*. Only *justice* can be *deserved*.

Suppose ten people sin and sin equally. Suppose God punishes five of them and is merciful to the other five. Is this *injustice*? No, in this situation five people get *justice* and five get *mercy*. No one gets *injustice*. What we tend to assume is that if God is merciful to five he must be equally merciful to the other five. Why? He is never obligated to be merciful. He never *owes mercy*. God is not *obliged* to treat all men equally. When God's justice falls, we are offended because we think God *owes mercy*. We must not take his grace *for granted*. We must never lose our capacity to be amazed by *grace*. When *justice*

falls, it's *deserved*. When God in grace shows mercy, that's amazing; when you think of his *glorious holiness*. His *grace* is much more plentiful in the bible than his *justice*.

Job challenged God's justice (Job 31:3-6; 32:1).

Job 31:3-6 Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.

Job 32:1 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

His charges were an insult to a *Holy God*. He had crossed a line in the debate, suggesting that perhaps God had done evil, that *injustice* was being done to Job. God asked him straight out, "*do you want to condemn me so that you can be exonerated?*" (Job 40:8).

Job 40:8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?

The lack of *knowledge of the holy* and things too wonderful (*too high*) for our understanding, causes man to question God's justice, (Job 42:1-3).

Job 42:1-3 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

Because God is *holy*, it is impossible for his justice to be anything but righteous. (Abraham, too, wrestled with the question of the justice of God (Gen. 18:23- 29).

Genesis 18:23-29 *And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.*

Let's look at one more passage that seems rather harsh to us (Deut. 7:1, 2).

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 *When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:*

In the conquest of Canaan, God explicitly commanded the slaughter of men, women, and children. The assumption of some commentators is that God wiped out innocent women and children in Canaan.

There were multitudes of women living there and multitudes of children. But there was none who was *innocent*. The conquest of Canaan was an expression of God's righteous judgment on a wicked nation. He also made it clear to Israel that she was also not innocent. It was not as if God destroyed a wicked people for the sake of a righteous people. To the Canaanites God poured out *justice*. To the Jews God poured out *mercy* (Deut. 9:4-6).

Deuteronomy 9:4-6 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.

The *Holiness* of God is at the heart of the issue of the conquest of Canaan. It was because of his *holiness* that the act was ordained. On the one hand he moved to punish the insult to his holiness that was daily perpetrated by the Canaanites. On the other he was preparing a land and a nation for a holy purpose. God commanded that no mercy be shown toward the inhabitants of the land. In Deuteronomy 7:3-10, he explained why.

Deuteronomy 7:3-10 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so

will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

God did not choose Israel because Israel was already holy. He chose them to make them holy. Israel was called to be holy in two senses. She was called to be different, Deut. 14:2, to be set apart as a vehicle of God's plan of redemption. She was also called to be holy in the sense of being purified. Pagan practices were to be absent from her. She was to be sanctified by drawing near to God. The Promised Land was to be the breeding ground for the coming Messiah. There was no room for pagan shrines and pagan rites. God ordained a scorched-earth policy to purge the land for future salvation.

Since it is our tendency to take *grace* for granted, it may be that God also found it necessary from time to time to remind

Israel that *grace* must never be assumed. On occasions he showed the dreadful power of his justice. He killed Nadab and Abihu. He killed Uzzah. He commanded the slaughter of the Canaanites. It is like he was saying "*be careful*." While you enjoy the benefits of my *grace*, don't forget my *justice*. Don't forget the gravity of sin. Remember that I am *holy*.

We think that God was harsh in his judgments in the Old Testament, but the most mysterious aspect of the mystery of sin is not that the sinner *deserves* to die, but rather that the sinner in the average situation *continues to exist*. It is customary or usual for God to be forbearing. He is long-suffering, patient, and slow to anger. In fact he is so slow to anger that when his anger does erupt we are *shocked and offended* by it. God's patience is designed to lead us to repentance. Instead of taking advantage of this patience by coming humbly to him for forgiveness, we use this grace as an opportunity to become more *bold in our sin*. We delude ourselves into thinking that he doesn't care about it (Eccl. 8:11). Most of the Old Testament is the history of a persistently hard-necked people who rebel time after time against God.

Luke 13:1-5 *There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

The question under discussion was: "*How could God allow these things to happen?*" Actually, it was a veiled accusation. The issue was,

as today, how can God allow innocent people to suffer? These eighteen innocent people were walking down the street minding their own business and boom, the tower falls on them. Jesus didn't say, "*I am very sorry to hear about this accident.*" He said: "*unless you repent, you too will all perish.*"

In effect, what Jesus was saying was: "*you people are asking the wrong question. You should be asking me, 'why didn't that tower fall on my head?'*" (For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God). With our first sin we have forfeited all rights to the gift of life. That I am drawing breath right now is an act of divine *mercy*. If God allowed the tower to fall on my head right now, I could not claim *injustice*.

Let's say that you were driving along at 65 mph and cars were passing you and a policeman pulled you over and gave you a ticket for speeding. Would you feel that you received an *injustice* because you were going slower than the other cars? And cry "*unfair?*"

In Jesus' day (as well as today) the Old Testament prophets were honored. They were great folk heroes from the past. Yet when they were alive they were hated, scorned, rejected, despised, persecuted, and killed by those living in their time. (Heb. 11:36-38).

Hebrews 11:36-38 *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

Why? Because they were *different*, they were *holy men* of God, speaking his *holy Word*, 2 Pet. 1:21.

2 Peter 1:21 *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

One of the strange facts of history is the consistently good reputation Jesus of Nazareth enjoys even with unbelievers. Even those who are hostile to the Church and Christians in general speak kindly of Jesus. People have an appreciation for *moral excellence*, as long as it is removed a safe distance from them. The Jews *honored the prophets*, from a distance. The world honors Christ, from a *distance*. People are always threatened by that *which is different (holy)*.

The party of the Jews who declared themselves the mortal enemies of Jesus was the *Pharisees*. The word "*Pharisee*" literally meant "*one who is separated*." The Pharisees separated themselves unto *holiness*. The pursuit of *holiness* was the chief business of their lives. They majored in *holiness*. If any group should have thrown their hats in the air when the *holy* one appeared on the scene it was the *Pharisee*. But they didn't. Why? --Because their *holiness* was a sham. There was no *authentic beauty to their holiness*. They were actors playing at being *holy*, which is why Jesus called them hypocrites (Matt. 23:25-28).

Matthew 23:25-28 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

Another group who had the same problem with Jesus was the *Sadducees*. They took their name from the OT priest Zadok, whose name was taken from the Jewish word for "*righteous*." If the Pharisees considered themselves to be the *holy ones*, the Sadducees claimed to be the *righteous ones*. But with the appearance of Jesus, their righteousness took on the luster of unrighteousness.

Jesus made them uncomfortable. They simply could not tolerate him because he was *different*.

It has been said that nothing dispels a lie faster than the *truth*. Nothing exposes the counterfeit faster than the *genuine*. The presence of Jesus represented the presence of the *genuine* in the midst of the *bogus*. Authentic *holiness* appeared; the counterfeiters of *holiness* were not pleased.

Christ is no longer walking the earth. He has ascended into heaven. Yet the threatening power of his *holiness* is still felt. Sometimes it is *transferred* to his people. As the Jews at the foot of Mt. Sinai fled in terror from the dazzling face of Moses, so people today get uncomfortable in the mere presence of *Upright Christians*. They are *above and beyond* that which is ordinary. They are, in fact, *peculiar, different, strange*, in a *special* way.

This is why Jesus said we would be hated because we are to be *different (holy)* (John 15:16-19).

John 15:16-19 *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own:*

but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.