

# HOLEY WHOLLY HOLY TO THE LORD

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Have you ever had a complaint against a pastor? (Some *other* pastor, of course!) What responsibility does a pastor really hold? Well, God has complained about pastors. Here is one of His complaints, expressed through Ezekiel:

*Ezekiel 22:26* **Your priests have violated my instructions and defiled my holy things. *They make no distinction between what is holy and what is not.* And they do not teach my people the difference between what is ceremonially clean and unclean.**

This pastor does not want to displease the Lord, so today, we're going to learn to distinguish between what is holy and what is not.

## Holiness to the Lord

This theme was first introduced to Israel—a people chosen by God to display His glory—when Moses established the priesthood. The high priest was to wear special garments, designated by God, for the pursuit of his ministry (as you see pictured on the screen).

Of particular significance was the gold medallion worn around his turban. It had words engraved upon it: Holy to the Lord.

*Exodus 28:36* **“Next make a medallion of pure gold, and engrave it like a seal with these words: *Holy to the Lord.*”** <sup>37</sup> *Attach the medallion with a blue cord to the front of Aaron’s turban, where it must remain.* <sup>38</sup> *Aaron must wear it on his forehead so he may take on himself any guilt of the people of Israel when they consecrate their sacred offerings. He must always wear it on his forehead **so the Lord will accept the people.***

So, the medallion represented the people of God. When worn by the high priest, it represented their divine calling: holiness. Holiness was *never* a condition to be deserved by God’s people, as if they were obedient angels and not faltering humans; it was always a condition ascribed to them, based on the service of their high priest.

## Becoming Holy

How does a thing, or a person, become “Holy to the Lord”? Moses began to unfold the answer to that question as a two-part process.

*Exodus 29:36* **Afterward, (1) cleanse the altar by purifying it; (2) make it holy by anointing it with oil.**

In our world—the world that is fallen because of sin—a person cannot become holy without first being cleansed. Because of sin, cleansing must precede holiness (or sanctification). This is a vital principle for us to learn.

You can't just "make something or someone holy." They must first be cleansed from their sin.

As the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, from one campsite to the next, they carried with them the elaborate trappings of the Tabernacle—a tent designed by God for meeting with His people in prayer and worship.

Before the entrance to the Tabernacle was placed a large altar (a giant grill, really) for offering burned animal sacrifices to the Lord. By these burnt sacrifices the people's sins were atoned and their guilt forgiven.

But before it could be used in such a manner, the altar itself had to be cleansed and prepared for divine service. Notice (from the book of Leviticus) how Aaron, the high priest, purified the altar.

*Leviticus 16:18* "Then Aaron will come out to **purify** the altar that stands before the Lord. He will do this by taking some of the blood from the bull and the goat and putting it on each of the horns of the altar. <sup>19</sup> Then he must **sprinkle the blood** with his finger seven times over the altar. In this way, he will cleanse it from Israel's defilement and make it holy.

So, it was cleansed by the sprinkling of blood. Then, it was made holy by anointing it with oil. In fact, nearly everything associated with the Tabernacle was prepared in the same way: First, ceremonially cleansed with blood, then made holy with oil.

*Exodus 40:9* "**Take the anointing oil and anoint the Tabernacle and all its furnishings to consecrate them and make them holy.**

Even the priests themselves...

*Exodus 30:29* Consecrate them to make them **absolutely holy**. After this, whatever touches them will also become holy.

This is the power of consecrated holiness: whatever touches them will also become holy!

Generally, under the First Covenant, whoever touched something or someone that was unclean also became unclean, and had to renew the process of cleansing in order to offer again acceptable worship to God.

Today, even in the secular world, we have a saying that recognizes this principle: “Hurting people hurt people.”

But God, and God alone, can turn that on its end! **Holy people heal people.**

So, how do we become such people? Do we have to earn our stripes? No.

There is a process, but it is not a matter of merit; **it is a matter of grace.**

## **Grace to Us Also**

This lesson from the Old Testament—the process of cleansing and anointing—has an essential application also in this New Testament era.

If God’s people—those who call Jesus Christ, Lord—are ever to be holy, they, too, must first be cleansed.

*Hebrews 13:12* **So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood.**

I suppose that if all that was required was the shed blood of the Son of God, then everyone in the whole world would automatically be saved (what theologians call “universalism”). But there is something else that is equally necessary.

*Ephesians 5:25* **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

Besides shedding His lifeblood for us, how else did Jesus cleanse His people? By the “washing of water with the word.” *Receiving the Gospel message*—not just hearing it, but believing it to the point of living by it—is also part of the cleansing process that God has designed. That’s why it is only to those “who receive Him” (Jesus) that He gives power to become the children of God (John 1:12).

## **Jesus Prayed for You**

Listen in, as Jesus lifts up His high priestly prayer to the Father on the eve of His arrest and execution...

*John 17:13* **“Now I am coming to You (Father). I told them (my disciples) many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. <sup>14</sup> I have given them Your word. And**

*the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I'm not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to this world any more than I do. <sup>17</sup> Make them holy by Your truth; teach them Your word, which is truth. <sup>18</sup> Just as You sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by Your truth.*

Let us learn three things from this passage.

**WHO makes you holy?** It is the Father, who loves us and sent His Son to redeem us from sin. It is He to whom Jesus prayed, “Make them holy.” Discovering this Fatherly who so loves us should be a giant pursuit in our lives.

**HOW does He make you holy?** He makes us holy “by His truth; His Word is truth. And it is the Spirit of the Lord who shows us what the Word means and how it applies to our lives. By the Holy Spirit and the Holy Word.

**On WHAT BASIS/ground can He do this?** It has always been God’s plan, for “*without holiness, no one shall see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14) But God does not make us holy as an arbitrary decision or an afterthought. The possibility for Him to do so is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus. Without that satisfactory payment for our sin, there would be no salvation—no cleansing and no holiness. “*There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

*<sup>1 John 5:7</sup> So we have these three witnesses—<sup>8</sup> the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree.*

Holiness to the Lord!

## **Holey Wholly?**

Now, why did I title this sermon, “Holey Wholly Holy to the Lord”? Is it just a play on words (homophones)?

Well, yes, but it is more significant than that.

We have already discussed being “holy to the Lord.” Being “wholly holy” to the Lord, indicates a thorough consecration, a recognition that your life is not your own any longer, but you belong to the Lord who bought you with His blood. There is a corresponding purpose of mind, of thought, of speech, of behavior—to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with our lives, 24/7/365—even though we falter through unbelief or sin.

“Holey” recognizes that we are still in process, still becoming “wholly holy,” with scars and struggles on the way. We’re not personally perfect yet, but God’s grace covers our sins, fills the holes, and smooths our way. He is not finished with us yet.

God is Holy, Holy, Holy. He is altogether worthy of your highest praise. And He has set His love on you!

In return, we are to be “holey wholly holy” to the Lord. Follow Him closely. Repent to Him easily. Trust Him intentionally. And set your love on Him!