

The Holiness of the Name of God

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[0 : 0 0] I want us to think for a little while this evening about the holiness of the name of God. When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he encourages them to say, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

And in Isaiah, chapter 6, we read that the seraphim cry, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Now, I have to confess that I am at odds with the catechism in this particular subject, which the catechism describes the phrase, hallowed be thy name, as the first petition in the Lord's Prayer.

And you can look it up in the shorter or the larger catechism, you'll find that it is described in the first petition. That's something which we ask, which we pray for, and it is put across as that is, you know, O Lord, may your name be hallowed.

You know, asking God to hallow his own name. Now, I confess that all my years, even as a wee boy, I never, ever thought of that statement as being a petition.

Never thought of it as something I was asking God to do, to make his name holy. But rather, I have always said, despite honor for the catechism and so on, cannot help but still regard it as a mere statement of fact, rather than as a petition.

[1 : 2 6] God's name is holy. Hallowed be thy name. Holy is your name, Lord. So, that being the case, both in Isaiah and the Sermon, both in the Sermon on the Mount, as our Lord encourages us to pray in this way, to approach the Father, how is our Father to sanctify his name?

It is worth asking, as far as God is holy, what do we mean by the holiness of the name of God? Now, as we say, the key verse in our Old Testament reading, in Isaiah chapter 6, is in verse 3, where you've got the seraphim crying one to another, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And of course, the capital letters for Lord, our covenanting omen, were the sacred men, the name that roughly is the Hebrew shortening of, I am that I am, or Yehovah, as it would be in the Hebrew, that we sometimes anglicize as, Jehovah, or the greatly irreverent, more than equivalent, Yahweh, but Jehovah is how it tends to be put, in devotional language, and this is the name of the Lord.

And it's why the Lord is put in capitals here, as it were, cover over the sanctity of the name, so that nobody takes that sacred name lightly to themselves.

For the Jews themselves, whenever they would read their own sacred scriptures, when they ever came to a place where the name of the Lord was written, they would always use the term Adonai, which is Hebrew meaning, my master, rather than the name of the Lord.

[3 : 1 1] They were so afraid of taking the Lord's name in vain, they wouldn't even pronounce it at all, and when they read through the scriptures. But here are the synaphim crying, holy, holy, holy, you know, why three times, as opposed to four times, or two times, or whatever, and we would have to say that this is indicative of the Trinity, this thrice holy name of God.

You know, so we say, why not four times, why not six times, why not seven times, the number of perfection, but it is three times. And we have this echoed again, of course, in the book of Revelation, in chapter four, where we read it, verse eight, the four beasts, had each of them six wings about them, just as the seraphim did, 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.

So we have the four beasts around the throne there, in Revelation four, verse eight. Remember that in biblical usage, as we've mentioned many times in the past, the name of somebody, was always far more than a mere identification label.

It was their very essence, their character, their substance, the whole reality of their person, is gathered up in that identity, in their name.

In Judges 13, verse 18, of course, when Samson's parents are visited by the angel, and Manoah asks, he says, the angel of the Lord said unto him, to Manoah, when he asks him what his name is, so that they can do him honour.

[4 : 49] He says, why askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret? And again, when Jacob, remember, has been wrestling with the angel, or the personification, I want me to put it, of God's presence at Peniel, in Genesis 32, and Jacob asked him, what is your name again?

The angel refuses to divulge his name. He's not going to give away his identity, his personhood, his substance, to this mere mortal.

So the name is a holy thing there. To be hallowed, then, means to be made holy. But, how do we unpack, identify what it means to be holy?

Okay, we say, well, it's been made holy, but, does that mean holy? At its most basic, holy means something set apart, or, to be precise, I suppose we could say, holy, W-H-O-L-L-Y, holy, set apart.

And it is the whole thing, the whole being, that is thus dedicated, hence, the form of contract, the form of holy, set apart in this way, specifically, something set apart, for sacred purposes.

[6 : 12] If we look, for example, at, in Exodus, we see how, at the time of the, of the death of the firstborn, just beforehand, the Lord warned, the Israelites, if we were to read, chapter 11 of Exodus, we would see, at verse 7, the Lord says, against any of the children, of Israel, shall not a dog, move his tongue, against man, nor beast, that ye may know, how that the Lord, doth put a difference, between the Egyptians, and Israel.

That's not, the Egyptians were more, more evil, than the Israelites, the Egyptians happened to be, in a nation, that was in control, of the Israelites, but they had good, bad, and indifferent people, amongst the Egyptians, just as they did, amongst the Israelites.

Soon as we get, into the wilderness, we soon find, that the Israelites, are by no means, paragons of virtue, but here we have, that they are, set apart, in this way, the Lord, doth put a difference, between the Egyptians, and Israel, at verse 7, there.

In biblical terms, we could, generalize perhaps, and say, that the term, holy, applies to, anything, pertaining, to God, anything, which is specifically, it's, anything, between, and certainly, the direct, and indirect, references, to him, as holy, can be, multiplied, throughout scripture, we could say, yes it is, anything to do with God, because anything to do with God, is by definition, holy, he is referred to, as a holy God, four times, in scripture, he is referred to, as the holy one, 16 times, he is referred to, as the holy one, in Israel, 31 times, other things, whether people, or places, or whatever, are referred to as holy, in terms of their relationship, to God, 28 times, and God's spirit, is referred to, as a holy spirit, seven times, or more often, usually in the New Testament, and particularly, in the authorised version, holy ghost, 89 times, and since we are dealing, with the expression, hallowed be thy name, it is worth noting, that his holy name, is explicitly referred to, 24 times, okay, so much, for statistics, but you get the picture, you get that, wherever these things, are identified with God, the spirit, the holy ghost, the holy one,

Israel, the holy thing, that is associated with him, and there are, multiplied examples, throughout scripture, again and again, and again, we might say, that what is holy, is contrasted, with what is evil, remember that, in Matthew 25, of course, that chilling, a parable, of the separation, of the sheep, and the goats, and we read, in verse 31, the son of man, shall come in his glory, and all the, holy angels, with him, then shall he sit, upon the throne, of his glory, now it is, unusual in a sense, to, to demarcate the angels, as holy angels, because usually, if they are just referred to, as angels, then they are holy, you don't tend to get, the fallen angels, occasionally, they are referred to, although they are, they are demons, technically, they are referred to, sometimes, as in verse 41, of Matthew 25, they are referred to, as his, the devil's angels, then shall he say, also unto them, on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels, it is unusual, to have the devil's angels, referred to as angels, it's not unique, but it's unusual, usually, having become, fallen angels, they are identified, by what they actually are, demons, devils, that is what they become, when they become, separated, from God, these spiritual beings, becoming fallen angels, identified correctly, as demons, or devils, spiritual beings, once serving the Lord, but now, dedicated, as it were, to enmity, with him, in Mark 8, verse 38, 38, we read, whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed, of me, and of my words, in this adulterous, and sinful generation, of him also, shall the Son of Man, be ashamed, when he cometh, in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, that's the Lord's angels, and then, you see, in Jude, for example, in verse 6, where,

[11 : 02] Jude identifies, he identifies, those angels, which kept not, their first estate, they were holy, they were, dedicated to the Lord, the angels, which kept not, their first estate, but left, their own habitation, he hath reserved, in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment, of the great day, they don't have to be, referred to as, unholy, they are fallen angels, usually, when we get angels, in general, in scripture, they are holy angels, that they don't have to be called that, because, the fact they're still angels, means, they have kept the estate, but, taking the whole counsel of God, we learn that, the contrast, between, holy, and, unholy, if you want to use that term, is not so much between, the Lord, and, the devil, what is explicitly of God, and what is explicitly, of the devil, as with, what is, of the world, it's not really, it's of God, on the one side, the devil, on the other side, it's more God, on the one side, and, the world, on the other, we look in,

Ezekiel, chapter 22, and we see, in verse 26, her priests, have violated, my law, and have profaned, mine, holy, things, they have put, no difference, between the holy, and profaned, neither have they, showed difference, between the unclean, and the clean, and have hid their eyes, from my sabbaths, and I am profaned, among them, and again, chapter 44, of Ezekiel, and verse 23, they shall teach, my people, the difference, between, the holy, and profaned, and cause them, to discern, between the unclean, and the clean, now as an adjective, profane, simply means, not holy, sometimes, having merely, the idea, of secular, in other words, pertaining, to the world, or to the age, as opposed, to the Lord, and consequently, as a verb, to profane, means, to treat, with contempt, that, which is sacred, not in the sense, of, grinding it down, and treading it, on the food, with hatred, and spitting on it, but, but rather, dishonoring it, in the sense, of, to treat it, as common, or, worldly, as though, it is simply, of this world, that, which is meant, to pertain, ultimately, to God, that is what it is, to profane, something, to treat it, as though, it is simply, of this world, when ultimately, it pertains, to God, the Lord, in his mercies, he has given, into man's hand, all that is, in, this world, it is ours, to subdue, to use, rightly, wisely, faithfully, to have dominion, over it, because, as much as God, has given it to us, it is ours, to profane, something then, is to treat, commonly, as ours, that, which God, has separated, for himself,

I'll say that again, to profane, something, is to treat, commonly, as ours, that, which God, has separated, for himself, now, this, just then, a little, closer, to defining, what makes, something, holy, refers, essentially, to something, which God, has quite deliberately, put, beyond, the scope, of our, normal, lives, to that, which God, claims, for himself, as belonging, to him, and not, to us, as being, essentially, beyond, the boundaries, which we would, normally, tread, and, under normal, circumstances, could never, do so, but are enabled, to do so, only, by his grace, and favor, these, things, these things, which are holy, are his, and not, ours, and, therefore, our entering, upon them, which we are encouraged, by him to do, our entering, upon them, requires, necessities, a certain, attitude, and recognition, that we, tread, upon, his, ground, now, and, must do so, with due, reverence, humility, and fear, it is, his, temple, it is, his,

Sabbath, his, holy ground, his, altar, his, sacrifice, it's, his, day, that's why, all of these things, are described, as holy, the holy temple, the holy Sabbath, the holy altar, take off thy feet, from the shoes, from thy feet, for the ground, that will understand, it is, holy ground, all these things, are his, this thing, is reinforced, by the fact, that, holiness, is not, an explicitly, enunciated, concept, until, we encounter it, first, in Exodus, chapter 3, at verse 5, with the burning bush, where we read, in chapter 3, verse 5, he, that is God, said, draw not, neither, but off thy shoes, from off thy feet, for the place, where on thou standest, is holy ground, and it caused it, to pertain to me, not to you, and your flocks, or to, or to the, the tribes, or to the tents, or to, all the, all the nations, round about, this is holy ground, and yet, as with everything else, which is holy,

God is not saying, never come here, no, you're not to come, come to this mountain, you're not to come, to this temple, you're not to, not to use this sacred name, you're not to, enter upon these sacrifices, when God says, something is holy, he's not saying, keep away, he's rather saying, recognize, the demarcation, between what is of the world, and what is mine, what is given into your hand, and what I have reserved, for myself, and as you come, to that which is mine, come with due, reverence, and humility, draw not my head, or put off thy shoes, from off thy feet, for the place, where on thou standest, is holy ground, that, now thereafter, the references, to that which is, holy, multiply, throughout scripture, we do not, encounter, the explicit, enunciation, of something, being, holy, prior, to this verse, in Exodus, prior, to the burning mission, and after that, the temple, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the altar, and so on, the descriptions, multiply, as the things, which are then described, as holy, but that means, that despite, the God honoring, personal relationships, which the patriarchs,

[18 : 46] Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and indeed Noah, and Enoch, and others, had with the Lord, in Genesis, holiness, is not, explicitly, enunciated there, it doesn't mean, that God wasn't, holy then, of course he was, it doesn't mean, that God didn't recognize, a distinction, between that, which was his, and other things, but it wasn't, explicitly spelled out there, all throughout Genesis, all throughout, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Noah, and Enoch, and all the sins, and this then, leads us to conclude, that the idea, of what is, explicitly, holy, enters in, with the beginning, of what becomes, formalized, regularized, systematized, worship, of a, holy, God, no longer, by a mere, family, however extended, because remember, when Jacob comes down, into Eden, like 70 souls, come with him, but it is basically, one huge, big family, it's a, a set, and I mean, it's all the descendants, of his 12 sons, and so on, and daughter, rather than, a nation, you might call it, a tribe perhaps, but it's a, it's a family, it's a huge, big extended family, but, by the time they go back, out again, it's a nation, and the worship, and the worship of God, has been set, and explicitly, and formalized, by men, an entire nation, now, only some of whom, would have, the kind of, deep, personalized, and special relationship, with the Lord,

Jehovah, that the patriarchs, have enjoyed, and far from being, you see, a negative idea, and we think, oh well, once it gets all formalized, and regularized, oh, that's not a good thing, is it, that's when legalism enters in, that's when you get, all manner of rules, and regulations, isn't it, so negative, isn't it, so awful, wasn't it much better, when you just had, Abraham and Isaac, and they just had, they sat in their tent, and they, they worshiped the Lord, and they set up their sacrifices, and they just, they just worshiped, you know, as families, and what was the state, of the world then, what was the state, of man as a whole, relationship with God, you were like, one family, of the ongoing, faithful, covenant life, and yes, you had more distant relations, like Laban, and the others, and Haran, and Syria, and so on, but they worshiped, other gods as well, you were like, one family, still holding fast, to the Lord, Jehovah, and the rest, were nowhere, the rest would be going to hell, in their own way, each one, but still going to hell, in their own way, once you get a nation, once you get a whole people, you can't just leave it, chaotically, to what every man sees, to do right, in his own eyes, chaos, is not honoring to God,

God is the one, who brings order, out of the chaos, who in the midst, of all the deep, and the darkness, said, let there be light, and there was light, God saw the light, that it was good, God divided, the light, from the darkness, and the light, he called day, and the darkness, he called light, and the evening, and the morning, were the first day, and so it went on, dividing, and subdividing, that which God, would bring, into creation, that which he, would declare, and create, to honor, himself, and his own name, once you have, a nation, represented, amongst all, the peoples, of the earth, once you have, a nation, that is dedicated, and devoted, however much, they may not, have actually, practiced it faithfully, but that nation, is worship, is devoted, to the worship, of the Lord, Jehovah, he is their God, in the midst of them, it is like, instead of, one tiny little, bundle, it is shining out, in the whole, blackness of the earth, it is like, suddenly it is a, it is a lamp, it is a, like the light, shining out, in the blackness, of the sea, suddenly it is, pointing in different, directions, revolving, other people see, there is a nation there, that only worships, one God, there is a nation there, that doesn't have idols, there is a nation there, that only comes together, to one place to worship, how strange, how curious, and they circumcise, their sons, and they have this,

Passover thing, as they remember, when they came out, of Egypt, how strange, they only have one God, why would they do that, and people are drawn, to that light, and they are drawn, to this worship, which God, has systematized, in order to glorify, his name, and draw people, to see, and wonder, at this God, who is, holy, and who calls, his people, and his followers, and his nation, likewise, to be, whole, far from being, a negative idea, this systematization, of worship, and religion, and boundaries, between God, and man, a consistent, reiteration, of how to worship, a holy God, of how to understand, his nature, his character, his name, makes for a clear, understanding, of who, this God is, that calls himself, I am, that I am, he is God, and there is none else, that is the, consistent message, throughout the old, test, all these other gods, all these other idols, they are actually, not gods at all, they are the inventions, of man, there is but one, only, the living and true God, that is the message, he is always giving out, all these idols, cards, stone, brass, gold, wood, whatever, they are just, the inventions, of man's vanity, there is one, alone, living and true God, he is God, there is none else, this is what he is like, separate, not only from the devil, and from hell, but from the world, and its fallenness, from man, and his sin, from earth, and its brevity, and he, keeps calling men and women, into, that, which is exclusively, his domain, and world, because that's where, he wants us, to be, remember how we said earlier, he has to say, oh this is my holy mountain, so never come here, this is my holy temple, so make you all stay away, this is my holy day, so avoid it like the plague, no, he is saying, all these things, these things are holy, come to that, come into my temple, come into my holy Sabbath, come into my tabernacle, enter into that, which is holy, but in doing so, become holy, set apart, to me, as I have set apart, you, for myself, this is what, he wants, us, to be, we read in Leviticus, 19, verse 2, speak unto all, the congregation, of the children of Israel, and say to them, ye shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy, chapter 20, verse 7, sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord, your God, chapter 21, verse 8, thou shalt sanctify, and therefore fully offer, the bread of thy God, he shall be holy unto thee, for I, the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy, so when we are taught, hallowed be thy name, when we pray to our Father, it's not that we are to avoid, the use of that name at all, perhaps, not even, though that, no doubt, their motives were genuine, and the Jews, that then would not use, the sacred name of the Lord, even in prayer, even in Bible reading, that is to go too far, it is to avoid,

God's holy tabernacle, it is to avoid, entering into that, intimacy, it is like a, a couple who marry, and then, refuse ever to come together, that live in separate houses, or stay always in separate rooms, or feel contamination, there is nothing contaminated, in that which God has sanctified, use, the holy name, our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed, be thy name, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God of hosts, he wants us to use it, but use it, and right, with due reverence, and humility, and godly fear, and recognition, of who this is, whom now, we approach, whom we approach, in his, holy day, his, holy Sabbath, his, holy, house of prayer, his, holy word, with his, holy name, holy, holy, holy is the Lord, set apart completely, for his own glory, and which he desires us, to enter, into, that we may do so, about, hallowed, be the name, of the Lord,

[28 : 46] Adam, dead story. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.