

(Rocky - Lesson 01 – 07/28/2024 - Handout) ADAM’S SIN, ATONEMENT, AND IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS:
The Doctrine of Divine Holiness – God as ‘Wholly Other’
(Exodus 15:11; Hosea 11:9^b, Isaiah 6:1-8; 2 Chronicles 26:4, 16-22)

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: To examine the mechanics of the salvation process: What is involved and what did God do?

THE GOAL OF THE STUDY: To gain a deeper understanding of **THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION**, in order to be able to offer praise and thanks to God for His marvelous grace and mercy.

OPENING SCRIPTURE – *“Who is like you among the gods, O LORD? Who is like you, majestic in HOLINESS, awesome in PRAISES, working WONDERS?” – Exodus 15:11*

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THEOLOGICAL TERMS WITH WHICH WE NEED TO BE FAMILIAR:

I. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES: Divine Attributes are characteristics of God’s Nature by which we come to know Him as God. For example: ★**HOLINESS IS A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE.**

DIVINE ATTRIBUTES may be separated into **TWO CATEGORIES:** (1) **COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES** and (2) **INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES:**

(A) **COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES** are aspects of GOD’S NATURE, shared to some degree by human beings as a result of being created in God’s Image (*Genesis 1:26-27*).

This presupposes there are some aspects of GOD’S NATURE that are reflected ... *in some way ... at least to a degree ...* in us.

(1) For example, God has built into the nature of man, A CONSCIENCE. Believers and unbelievers alike possess an innate understanding that there is **RIGHT** and there is **WRONG**. We may differ on how right and wrong are defined, but *‘THE IDEA OF RIGHT AND WRONG’* is part of who we are ... *[So THE CONSCIENCE is part of THE IMAGE OF GOD implanted in us at creation.]*

(2) Another example of A COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTE is LOVE. *[We cannot LOVE in the same way and to the same degree that GOD LOVES US, but LOVE is A COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTE. It is something we can understand and experience to a limited degree.]*

(B) **INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES** are aspects of GOD’S NATURE that are *unique* to God alone. This presupposes there are ASPECTS OF GOD’S NATURE that are not shared by His Creatures or by any element of His Creation. *Examples of INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES may include such things as God’s Eternality, His Self-existence (as expressed, e.g., in HIS DIVINE NAME, ‘I AM’), His Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, and His Absolute Sovereignty. [So INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES are unique to God and are not imbedded in us as part of the Image of God imparted at Creation.]*

I propose the proper starting place for understanding the gospel is to begin with one of the most significant of the Divine Attributes: **THE HOLINESS OF GOD.**

II. Related to this is another theological term (*actually a phrase*) we should know. The phrase is *‘God is Wholly Other.’* Our opening Scripture this morning is a good source for understanding this phrase. God describes this aspect of His nature by asking a rhetorical question: *‘WHO IS LIKE GOD?’* The answer is, *‘No one is like God,’* and the deduction from this is, *‘God is wholly unlike any other being in the universe; He is uniquely ‘WHOLLY OTHER.’*

The first theologian to use this phrase was RUDOLF OTTO¹, but it was soon borrowed by RUDOLF BULTMANN¹ and it was BULTMANN who gave broader exposure to the phrase.

¹ Both Otto and Bultmann were 19th Century Lutheran theologians. Otto was heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Neither he nor Bultmann are of our theological camp to say the least. Both denied

III. Two more theological terms we need to consider are (1) TRANSCENDENCE and (2) IMMANENCE.

(A) TRANSCENDENCE refers to ‘GOD AS INFINITELY DISTANT’ from His creation. As THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE, God is GREATER than the universe. He is IN the universe but He is NOT LIMITED OR BOUND BY IT. In contrast, we are bound both by space and time. We cannot escape either space or time ... but God does not share these limitations.

When we say, ‘GOD IS ETERNAL,’ we are not simply saying, ‘He’s been around for a long time’ ... we are acknowledging that He is not bound by time; and ... when we say, ‘GOD IS OMNIPRESENT’ we mean more than ‘He is everywhere.’ We mean He is not limited by the physical universe.

(So whereas TRANSCENDENCE emphasizes SEPARATION) ...

(B) IMMANENCE refers to GOD’S NEARNESS AND INVOLVEMENT with His Creation. *He is present in every aspect of the world He has made ... yet at the same time HE IS DISTINCT from it.*

An over emphasis on either TRANSCENDENCE or IMMANENCE always results in HERESY.

- TRANSCENDENCE without IMMANENCE will land you in THE CAMP OF THE DEISTS, who describe God as THE COSMIC CLOCK-MAKER, who created the universe (*the Clock*), set it in motion (*i.e., Wound the Clock*), then walked away never to be involved with His Creation again. *[On the other hand] ...*
- IMMANENCE without TRANSCENDENCE leads to PANTHEISM, where God is bound within the confines of the universe, and in fact IS the universe. This was the fundamental error of THE CANAANITE RELIGIONS and is the fly-in-the-ointment of ALL EASTERN RELIGIONS today. *(Actually it is one of many flies but it’s A BIG FLY.)*
- *[PANTHEISM IS THE PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE]* When you hear terms like, ‘MOTHER EARTH,’ or ‘MOTHER NATURE,’ this is EXACTLY what is in view ... for ‘PANTHEISM’ means: ‘Everything is god and god is everything.’

Any over-emphasis of IMMANENCE to the exclusion of TRANSCENDENCE results in an *impersonal god* and ultimately results in *the worship of the creation itself*, as PAUL so aptly points out in ROMANS CHAPTER ONE where he writes:

They exchanged the truth of God for THE LIE and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever – Romans 1:25.

If ‘everything is god’ and ‘god is everything,’ then the creation – not the Creator – becomes the object of worship.

The reason I mentioned BULTMANN earlier and his description of God as ‘WHOLLY OTHER’ is because today’s topic is DIVINE HOLINESS. And *the issue man faces with respect to DIVINE HOLINESS is the issue of ‘ACCESS.’*

★TRANSCENDENCE IS A BARRIER THAT CANNOT BE BREACHED BY MAN. ACCESS TO GOD can only be achieved if GOD DOES SOMETHING *for* or *to* finite man. *GOD [in His TRANSCENDENCE] is INCOMPREHENSIBLE, UNATTAINABLE, and UNREACHABLE. So it is God, who must make Himself known to us; and ... it is God, who must reach out to us.*

This is why PAUL can write in 1 CORINTHIANS: “*THE NATURAL MAN does not ACCEPT the things of the Spirit of God for they are FOOLISHNESS to him; and HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM because they are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED*” – 1 Corinthians 2:14.

the physical resurrection of Jesus, as well as the possibility of supernaturalism; nevertheless, this phrase coined by Otto is quite helpful in helping us understand the nature of God.

TO SUM UP, MAN CANNOT COMPREHEND THE NATURE OF GOD UNLESS GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN ... **THUS THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION.** Apart from REVELATION, man will define himself when looking for God within himself. THEOLOGY must be OBJECTIVE not SUBJECTIVE.

Beyond this ... **SIN HAS SEPARATED US FROM GOD MORALLY ... THUS THE NECESSITY OF REDEMPTION.** Man cannot save himself by any means available to man: Salvation comes *not* by good works, ritual, or religious acts, for **THE INFINITE, TRANSCENDENT GOD is beyond the finite reach of man.**

It is true that SIN forms AN UNBREACHABLE MORAL BARRIER between God and Fallen Man ... but it is **TRANSCENDENCE that poses an even greater BARRIER ...** because TRANSCENDENCE is itself a chasm across which only God can reach.

It is critical that we understand THE NATURE OF HOLINESS ... *What is it and how it plays into this DILEMMA OF ACCESS?*

Let's begin with the words themselves. There are two words used in the Bible that are translated 'HOLY' or 'HOLINESS' ... There is an Old Testament word and a New Testament word:

The Hebrew word translated 'HOLINESS' is קָדוֹשׁ (*pronounced qādōsh*). The root meaning of this word, both in Hebrew and in many other Semitic Languages, is, 'TO CUT' or 'TO SPLIT.' So, the main idea implicit to the term 'HOLINESS' is 'SEPARATION.'

The corresponding Greek word is ἅγιος (*pronounced hágios*). The root meaning of this noun also is: 'SEPARATION.'

So, the most basic meaning of 'HOLINESS' is NOT 'MORAL PURITY' or 'MORAL PERFECTION.' The primary meaning of 'HOLINESS' is NOT 'ETHICAL' or 'MORAL' at all; 'HOLINESS' means 'OTHERNESS' ... 'SEPARATION.'

When BULTMANN says, **GOD IS W-H-O-L-L-Y OTHER**, he is saying, **GOD IS UNAPPROACHABLE.** If this seems strange, let me remind you of two graphic examples of the Hebrew word *qādōsh* ... ('holiness') used in the Old Testament in the purest sense of its true meaning. By a slight variation of the term (*qādōsh to qedēshah – and all this alteration does is add a feminine ending to the word qādōsh*) the word then is translated 'CULT PROSTITUTE' in DEUTERONOMY 23:17 (*BH 23:18*). Then in 2 KINGS 23:7, a derivative of *qādōsh (qādēsh)* is used to describe **MALE PROSTITUTES** who were disposed by **JOSIAH** as part of his religious reforms.

[In both cases, these prostitutes are called 'HOLY' ... not because they are ethically pure, but because they are set apart (separated) from the rest of society for specific cultic purposes.]

It should be clear from these two examples that the root meaning of the term, 'HOLY' refers **NOT PRIMARILY** to GOD'S MORAL PERFECTION but rather to HIS 'OTHERNESS' ... to that **INFINITE CHASM OF SEPARATION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CREATION.**

(1) **SO THE PRIMARY MEANING OF 'HOLINESS'** calls our attention to 'GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE.' He is ABOVE us and BEYOND us, and in this primary sense, HOLINESS is not A MORAL ATTRIBUTE.

(2) **BUT IN ITS SECONDARY MEANING,** 'HOLINESS' **DOES** refer to GOD'S MORAL PURITY. *GOD IN HIS 'OTHERNESS,' i.e., GOD IN HIS TRANSCENDENCE,* is separated **FROM** all that is COMMON or PROFANE. Because God is separated from His Creation, *He also is set apart from all Evil. He is untouched by sin.* Furthermore, that which is 'HOLY' not only is set apart **from** the profane, but He is set apart **for** all that is ethical and good.

LET'S LOOK AT ISAIAH 6:1-8 ... In verse one we are informed of the time period in which the call of ISAIAH took place: it was in the year THE JUDEAN KING UZZIAH DIED: *It was about 740 B.C.* KING UZZIAH was one of the good kings of JUDAH. None of the kings lacked fault, but UZZIAH never turned away from the worship of YAHWEH as most of the others did.

That said, one deviation from the Law ruined UZZIAH'S life. **Look at 2 CHRONICLES 26:16-22.**

To appreciate what happened, we need to understand something about the relationship between kings and priests in the Mosaic Law. UZZIAH'S PRIDE led him to make a terrible error that resulted in his contracting LEPROSY: He entered the temple to burn incense on the Altar of Incense. Now this may not seem like a big deal to us, but according to THE MOSAIC LAW, it was forbidden for the king to perform any of the priestly functions. **Under THE MOSAIC LAW, the offices of PRIEST and KING were kept separate.** All LEGITIMATE KINGS came from THE TRIBE OF JUDAH, but THE PRIESTS came from THE TRIBE OF LEVI. UNDER THE LAW, these offices prefigured the work of MESSIAH, who would hold THE THREE OFFICES OF PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING ... but until those positions were combined in THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST – they were kept separate and distinct in ISRAEL.

THE HIGH PRIEST AZARIAH recognized this and confronted UZZIAH in the temple, where he warned the king not to burn the incense. But UZZIAH did it anyway and as a result, God brought upon him the plague of LEPROSY immediately while the king stood enraged in the temple. And UZZIAH remained A LEPER until the day he died.

UZZIAH crossed the line that separated *kingship* from *the priesthood* ... an office God had declared was 'HOLY,' i.e., 'set apart' solely for THE LEVITES.

[This was God's way of reminding ISRAEL that THE PRIESTHOOD WAS A HOLY OFFICE ... an office SEPARATED from THE OFFICE OF KINGSHIP.]

ISAIAH was in the temple, possibly mourning the death of UZZIAH – and while he was there, he had a vision.

In verse two we are introduced to a class of angels: THE SERAPHIM. The word 'SERAPH' means, 'to burn.' As a plural noun, SERAPHIM means 'BURNERS.' 'HEAT' is a hint ... THE SERAPHIM are 'PURIFIERS,' in the sense that HEAT burns away chaff and dross ... a purification ISAIAH will need if he is to serve THE HOLY GOD OF ISRAEL.

In verse 3 THE SERAPHIM are chanting the words: *qādôsh qādôsh qādôsh* – 'HOLY HOLY HOLY IS THE LORD OF HOSTS; THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY.' These angels are proclaiming 'THE OTHERNESS OF GOD' ... They are saying, 'God who is pure, and uniquely different from us.'

In verse four THE SMOKE that fills the Temple emphasizes 'THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD' due to 'HIS TRANSCENDENT NATURE.'

Now look at verse five. I want you to notice the response of ISAIAH upon seeing a vision of THE LORD IN HIS MAJESTY; he says: "*Woe am I for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, THE LORD OF HOSTS.*"

ISAIAH uses words that describe his dilemma. He is 'ruined' according to THE NASB and THE NIV. ISAIAH recognizes he is lacking in MORAL CHARACTER ... but in light of our discussion about 'separation,' *it is clear ISAIAH means he is 'cut off' with regard to 'access.'*

Once again, we see man without access to God ... ISAIAH is 'cut off' from His presence, this time by the sinful nature of his heart. It also is instructive that ISAIAH did not have to be told he was cut off ... he knew it intrinsically. Notice what he says:

*Woe am I for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips,
For my eyes have seen the King, THE LORD OF HOSTS – Isaiah 6:5.*

Between FALLEN MAN ... and GOD IN HIS IMMANENCE ... i.e., in HIS DIVINE PRESENCE ... there is A MORAL EXCLUSION that is the result of GOD'S ABSOLUTE MORAL PURITY (THAT SECONDARY ELEMENT OF HIS HOLINESS) and MAN'S ABSOLUTE SINFULNESS. *I am concerned we do not realize the*

degree to which we need a savior! For we cannot reach God by human effort; HE IS TRANSCENDENT and therefore UNREACHABLE; and even in HIS IMMANENCE ... IN HIS NEARNESS ... *we are separated from Him on moral grounds.*

ISAIAH SIX would be a depressing chapter if it ended with **VERSE 5** ... fortunately **VERSES 6-7** provide a solution both to **THE SIN PROBLEM** and to the problem of **GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE**.

NOTICE THE SERAPH, THE BURNING COAL, AND THE ALTAR:

- THE SERAPH is characterized by HEAT. (*Remember ... the word 'SERAPH' means, 'the burning one.'*) This is symbolic of course because heat represents purification.
- THE BURNING COAL represents JUDGMENT. It represents the judgment that was laid on JESUS CHRIST when *He was judged on behalf of ISALIAH so ISALIAH would not be judged.*
- And notice THE ORIGIN OF THE BURNING COAL: it was taken off THE ALTAR. This is no small thing for it tells us there is no forgiveness apart from the Cross.

It was this cleansing that made ISAIAH'S CALL possible – and there is an important sequence:

- First was the revelation of THE ABSOLUTE HOLINESS OF GOD in VERSES 1-4.
- Then came the knowledge of sin in VERSE 5.
- This is followed by the confession of sin, also in VERSE 5.
- Immediately, THE BENEFITS OF THE CROSS ... (*an event yet future for ISALIAH*) ... were applied in full to ISAIAH. This is recorded in in VERSES 6-7.
- Following this, in VERSE 8, we see God calling ISAIAH to service as A PROPHET.
- And finally, ISAIAH'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALL (*'HERE AM I, SEND ME'*) ... is recorded at the end of VERSE 8.

THIS PATTERN NEVER CHANGES:

Remember I said our starting line is God Himself? *GOD FIRST MUST REVEAL HIMSELF TO US IN HIS IMMANENCE.* It is He who must *BRIDGE THE GAP OF HIS TRANSCENDENCE* if there is to be any TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. *We will never seek God unless He first seeks us – Romans 3:10-11.*

It is the revelation of GOD'S HOLINESS that brings about THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN. And it is THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN that leads to CONFESSION. But CONFESSION will not happen without the prompting of THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The way to understand this *theologically* is to make a distinction between ...

- THE EXTERNAL CALL – *i.e., simply hearing the gospel presented, and ...*
- THE EFFICACIOUS CALL – *i.e., the call that brings about a willing (volitional) response from the one who hears the gospel.*

Now in my closing remarks, I want to speak to you about the gospel, for it is the gospel that offers HOPE to every man and woman, who will accept it.

I have spent some time today doing my best to explain that our need for a Savior is far greater than perhaps we have realized. For not only are we separated from God by sin, but we also are separated from Him by an infinite chasm that exists between God and man. It is a chasm as extensive as the difference between THE CREATOR and HIS CREATION. And if there is to be a relationship between God and man ... then God must bridge that gap because we can't do it.

GOD IS THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR SALVATION ... and the solution He provides must be greater than the problem that solution seeks to resolve. Well, the two problems are INFINITE ... THE SIN PROBLEM IS INFINITE and THE TRANSCENDENCE PROBLEM IS INFINITE! The chasm is too wide for us to cross –

SO WHAT DID GOD DO? *He addressed the problem of TRANSCENDENCE in several different ways, but ultimately, He resolved it through THE INCARNATION.*

ISRAEL'S THEOLOGY is grounded in the acts God performed in HISTORY: God said repeatedly, THE PLAGUES He brought on EGYPT were done 'so EGYPT will know that I am God.'

And of course, there is THE SEMINAL EVENT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY: THE EXODUS AND THE SPLITTING OF THE SEA, etc. ISRAEL ALSO HAD her prophets ... and ISRAEL and THE CHURCH have THE SCRIPTURES ...

BUT FINALLY, GOD SENT HIS SON TO BECOME ONE OF US: THE BOOK OF HEBREWS OPENS WITH THESE WORDS:

Long ago, at many times and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets (revelation); but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son (the incarnation), whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world – Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)

The Bible is clear that no one has seen God because no one CAN see God and live. **BUT IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, we can look directly into the face of God ... and we can live.**

JESUS CHRIST is the perfect, exact representation of THE HOLY, TRANSCENDENT GOD, Who NOW is NEAR and ACCESSIBLE because of THE INCARNATION.

What we could not know BEFORE ... WE NOW KNOW by and in THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST. Through Him alone we have access to the Father ... but there still is the sin problem.

AGAIN LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF ISAIAH:

THE LORD'S HAND is not so short that it cannot save; neither is HIS EAR dull that He cannot hear; BUT YOUR INIQUITIES HAVE MADE A SEPARATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOD, and YOUR SINS HAVE HIDDEN HIS FACE FROM YOU so that He does not hear – Isaiah 59:1-2.

ISAIAH IS REFERRING TO THE MORAL SEPARATION: THE SEPARATION FROM GOD BECAUSE OF SIN.

PAUL also informs us in ROMANS: "All have sinned and are falling short of the Glory of God ... and DEATH is the wage someone must pay for that sin" – Romans 3:23, 6:23(a).

If we are to have a relationship with God, then THE SIN PROBLEM must be resolved ... and it has been resolved by the death, burial, and resurrection of JESUS.

Paul explains in 2 CORINTHIANS exactly how God resolved the sin problem: "God the Father made Him (Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, so we might become the Righteousness of God in Him" – 2 Corinthians 5:21.

God dealt judicially with JESUS, who was without sin, so that he could deal with SINNERS ... like you and me ... on the basis of GRACE.

THE INFINITE, TRANSCENDENT GOD, who by His very nature is inaccessible, became one of us when 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' – John 1:14.

JESUS CHRIST, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, and thus was uniquely qualified to stand in the place of the human race when He died on the Cross. Because He is sinless, He was able to stand in the place of the sinner. Because He is fully God, His sacrifice was of infinite value, fully sufficient to satisfy the requirements of God's Perfect Justice. Because He is fully man, he could stand for the human race. And because He was raised from the dead, He defeated sin and death forever.

THIS IS THE GOSPEL; THIS IS OUR HOPE; it is upon this we trust our very souls. Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life are free gifts offered to you on the basis of the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ ... Accept the gift. It's yours when you put your faith in JESUS CHRIST.