

# DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

October 15 – 19, 2007



October 15, 2007

## God is Holy

*“Who among the gods is like you, LORD?  
Who is like you—majestic in holiness,  
awesome in glory, working wonders?”<sup>1</sup>*

The Hebrew word ‘to be holy’ (quadash) is derived from a root meaning to ‘cut’ or ‘separate’. It points to the first and more important understanding of God’s holiness – that God is absolutely distinct and exalted above all his creatures in his infinite majesty.

Twentieth century theologian Rudolph Otto<sup>2</sup> suggested that this most essential quality of God is also ‘non-rational’ – eluding description in mere human words or images. He labeled it “the numinous’ and suggested that it included ideas such as “absolute un-approachability”, “absolute nothingness” and ‘awe-full’ majesty”. It evokes in us a sense of awe and of our own lowliness and unworthiness. Such was John’s response to his vision of the exalted Christ in heaven:

*“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.  
Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do  
not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.”<sup>3</sup>*

These days, God is often perceived as a user-friendly, ‘good buddy’ in heaven. While the reality of God’s grace and fatherly love is always to be depended upon, meditating upon God’s holiness is critical to a true perception of God. The Lord of the Universe is not ‘man writ large’. God is exalted, glorious and far above us mortals. He is holy in all he is and does.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 15:11 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Rudolph Otto, Das Heilige or The Idea of the Holy.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 1:17 (TNIV)

October 16, 2007

## God is Holy

*"So listen to me, you men of understanding.  
Far be it from God to do evil,  
from the Almighty to do wrong."<sup>1</sup>*

The second and more familiar aspect of God's holiness has an ethical dimension – that God is separate from moral evil or sin. God cannot do wrong, nor can he ultimately tolerate it.

If we react to God's 'majestic-holiness' with a sense of our insignificance and awe, our response to his ethical holiness is a sense of our own sinfulness and impurity. Isaiah cries out in this way in response to his vision of the Lord in the Temple, 'high and exalted'....

*"Woe to me!" I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."<sup>2</sup>*

Jesus, the "Holy and Righteous One"<sup>3</sup> reflected this perfect holiness of God in his life and modeled what it means for a human to walk in that holiness. He was "tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin"<sup>4</sup>.

It is the role of the Holy Spirit to instill that holiness in us and have it bear fruit in holy living as we surrender more and more of our lives to the will of God.

October 17, 2007

## God is Righteous and Just

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<sup>1</sup> Job 34:10 (TNIV) See also Hab. 1:13

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6:5 (TNIV)

<sup>3</sup> Acts 3:14

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:15

*“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”<sup>1</sup>*

God’s righteousness is closely linked with his holiness. The essential idea of righteousness is the strict adherence to a standard of right and wrong. In God’s case there is no pre-existent law above him, but there is within his nature an absolute standard of right and wrong – which he never violates.

God’s adherence to this standard of righteousness is manifested by ‘doing justice’ in the world. He rules creation with a moral government – imposing just laws upon us, communicating them to us and judging us accordingly. The righteous one must act justly – by rewarding those who are obedient and punishing those who are transgressors of his moral law<sup>2</sup>. Because the Judge of the universe is omniscient, knowing even the thoughts and intentions of our hearts, his judgements are never wrong.

It should be noted that God’s justice is primarily ‘retributive’ – designed to punish sin and deal with the problem of evil. God’s judgements may sometimes reform the sinner or they may also act as a deterrent to others, but their primary purpose is the maintenance of right and justice. We are sometimes uncomfortable with the idea of human judges ‘playing God’ by exercising retributive justice and ‘punishing’ wrongdoing. We prefer to think of human courts as rehabilitating or deterring. The divine Judge is qualified for this role - righteousness will triumph in his universe!

October 18, 2007 **Leave the Judging with God**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 4:8 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> E.g. 2 Thess. 1:8-10; Romans 1:32; 2:9; 12:19

*“Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of people’s hearts. At that time each will receive their praise from God.”<sup>1</sup>*

Sometimes we fall into the temptation to make judgement calls on the final destiny of others. We may ‘know’ that so and so wasn’t saved because they were not overtly religious. Or we may assume a certain person is definitely ‘in’ because once, long ago, they made a ‘decision’ or because they attended Church.

If asked to venture an opinion about the eternal state of another person, an appropriate response for the Christian might be that we are in ‘sales’, not ‘management’. While we may have strong confidence in the case of those who give outward evidence of grace, we cannot judge the thoughts or intentions of people’s hearts. We don’t know what things they may have expressed to God in secret. Our role is to share the good news of Christ’s love by word and action in the hope that people may respond in faith. It is God’s job to make the judgement call on their eternal destiny.

In one thing we can be confident: God’s judgments will always be right and good. He will not punish the righteous, nor will he let the wicked go free. We can leave these things in his hands and be at peace. He knows what he is doing.

October 19, 2007

**God is Sovereign**

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 4:5 (TNIV)

*“Yours, Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth are yours.”<sup>1</sup>*

God is Sovereign ruler over all the universe because he is its creator and sustainer. We belong to him and are utterly dependent upon him for life itself.

God’s ‘will’ is the active expression of his right and ability to rule. God’s will embraces the ‘macrocosm’ as he rules over the affairs of peoples and nations to accomplish his purposes<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, God ‘micro-manages’ the lives of individuals – he has plans and purposes for each of us and he longs for us to live in the center of his will.<sup>3</sup>

We often struggle with God’s sovereignty because it is a direct challenge to fallen nature. Fallen humanity asserts that ‘we can be as gods’ – we can sit in the driver’s seat of our own lives and be in charge. Humanity, apart from God, is essentially in rebellion. And the habits of that old ‘reb’ nature die hard.

We may also struggle with the will of God because we fear it may mean trials, troubles, persecutions and sorrows. And, it may.

However our Sovereign God is loving and graciously disposed toward us. His plans are for good, not evil<sup>4</sup> and there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from his love.<sup>5</sup> Therefore,...

*“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.”<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:11 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Psalm 2

<sup>3</sup> E.g. – Matthew 6:25-34

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 29:11

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 19:6