

HOLY

BRIAN HANNIGAN

"Oh, magnify the Lord," declares the psalmist. A magnifying glass and a microscope permit a closer look into the natural realm, providing access to details unseen by the naked eye. This can enhance the appreciation and understanding of the subject.

In Christian life we often encounter the term 'holy.' It fills and defines our songs, our hymns, and our worship. When we think of God's holiness our minds imagine His purity, His perfect loveliness, a profound sense of awe and reverence. God is most Holy; the Holy One. Angels in heaven worship God, declaring, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Those redeemed by the Son of God believe in a Holy God, and consider Him worthy to receive honour and praise from human lips.

It is, therefore, no surprise when God asserts, "*I am Holy.*"

What is profound is His whole statement; "*Be ye holy as I am holy*" (1 Peter 1:16). You be holy just like I am. This scripture, repeated by God to natural and spiritual Israel alike, is no mere suggestion. He expects us to be holy.

The quality of that holiness is also clear; our holiness will be like God's holiness. "*Be ye holy AS I am holy.*"

How can a Holy God expect holiness in mankind? The notion staggers human reason. Does reflection on an individual or humanity as a whole inspire the notion of holiness? On the contrary; most people would heartily deny being holy. Yet there can be residing in the heart of believers in Jesus Christ a faith, imparted at salvation, that can embrace this expectation of God. Truly, God intends us to be holy!

The wonderful realization is this: God would not require such a thing if it were not achievable. But how can it be?

Just as washing with **clean** water makes us clean, so it is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us **holy**. With this in mind, we can see more clearly why Jesus, as He was about to ascend to the Father, declared that He would send the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is the resource of holiness.

Therefore, there is only one path into holiness. It is attained through the abiding relationship with Jesus Christ along with by the

accompanying work of His Holy Spirit.

This was always God's plan. This is what was meant when God said, *"Let us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness"* (Genesis 1:26). The same message came from our Saviour when He declared, *"If you abide in Me and I in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you"* (John 15:4).

Holiness will be more than the attainment of individuals. Rather, it will be the entering in of a corporate Body. Ephesians 4 describes a people coming to *"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* built on the apostolic foundation. They grow up together by the operation of spiritual gifts for each other's benefit and growth. So, it will not be human achievement, but the work of God. Only God will deserve the glory. But we shall all be changed. You will be made holy as you yield to Him! You are refined as you yield to the Holy Spirit when the Church gathers and in daily interactions when you allow Christ within to express His ministry through you to others.

What will be your state when you are holy? This is such good news! You will be free of fear, of hatred, anger, temptation, confusion, compromise, failure, criticism, contempt, weakness, pride, selfishness, rebellion, sin, sickness, despair, loneliness, division, and death. You will operate in perpetual joy, hope, wisdom, faith, power, fellowship, unity, health, friendship, and love. Gifts and ministries will be in full fledge. In and through it all will be the God of love, the help of the Holy Spirit, and the upholding power of the Son of God to bring *"many sons to glory"* (Hebrews 2:10).

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be

compared with the glory that shall be revealed" (Romans 8:18). With this 'joy' set before the body of Christ they can endure the rigors of preparation necessary for the demise of the selfish life. *"For it is God who is at work in us to desire and to do His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13). *"Even as light dispels darkness, so will our abiding in Jesus complete the work. Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27). *"You will be transformed into the same likeness, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God"* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Jesus, I Come – William T. Sleeper

Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus I come;
 Into Thy freedom, gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee;
 Out of my sickness into Thy health, Out of my want
 and into Thy wealth,
 Out of my sin and into Thyself, Jesus, I come to Thee.
 Out of my shameful failure and loss, Jesus I come, Jesus, I come;
 Into the glorious gain of Thy cross, Jesus, I come to Thee;
 Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm, Out of life's storms
 and into Thy calm,
 Out of distress to jubilant psalm, Jesus I come to Thee.
 Out of unrest and arrogant pride, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
 Into Thy blessed will to abide, Jesus I come to Thee;
 Out of myself to dwell in Thy love, Out of despair into raptures
 above,
 Upward for aye on wings like a dove, Jesus, I come to Thee.
 Out of the fear and dread of the tomb, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
 Into the joy and light of Thy home, Jesus, I come to Thee;
 Out of the depths of ruin untold, Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,
 Ever Thy glorious face to behold, Jesus, I come to Thee. †



In a Sharon Star article the following statement was made, "Insidiously, there are ever-present those who wish to adopt modern church vernacular." What they are really saying is they wish that the church would "conform to the pattern of this world." In the more modern vernacular they are saying, "get with the times." The pressures to conform to the pattern of this world are unceasing. The institution of marriage and the home, the church, our work ethic and personal integrity are constantly under pressure to deviate from the patterns established by God, often leading to persecution or ridicule for those who refuse to conform. One example of this is in God's pattern for the home and marriage. In His pattern, unmarried people do not have the same privileges nor the responsibilities as do married couples. I know that many readers have

chosen to follow the biblical pattern laid out by God regarding marriage and the structure of the home. I am also confident that many of you at some point have been ridiculed or persecuted for your decisions to follow the biblical pattern, even by friends. God's pattern for marriage is viewed by the world as outdated, and the church has been admonished to "get with the times." Likewise, we constantly face pressure to change the structure of the church to conform to the pattern of this world. This pressure to "get with the times" is ever-present within the universal church today, but it is not a recent development. Rather, this pressure has existed for thousands of years.

Thousands of years ago, and before the coming of Christ on the earth,

God established an order for both the social and religious life of His people, Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament. Within that order for their religious life, God set forth a pattern for temple worship. When that pattern was set forth, God simply asked Israel to be obedient and to walk according to the instruction set forth in the pattern.

“The Lord said to Moses, “Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle” (Numbers 3:5-7, NIV).

“Give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to him. 10 Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests” (Numbers 3:9-10, NIV).

“The Lord said to Aaron, “You, your sons and your father’s family are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the priesthood. Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the Tent of the Testimony” (Numbers 18:1-2, NIV).

“I myself have selected your fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the Lord to do the work at the Tent of Meeting. 7 But only you and your sons may serve as priests...” (Numbers 18:6-7, NIV).

This pattern is often referred to as the Levitical priesthood, and in the books of Exodus and Numbers there are many more verses that confirm this pattern. Not all Levite men were priests, but all priests were of the tribe of Levi. In Exodus 28:1-4, we see that God indicated the tribe of Levi for the priesthood because He called Aaron and his four sons from the tribe of Levi to be the first priests. The tribe of Levi was further singled out as described in Exodus 32:26-29 following the infamous incident with the golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai. It was the tribe of Levi who alone sided with God to execute judgment against their brothers for their idolatry.

Following the death of King Solomon, his son Rehoboam was anointed king. Over time, the tribes of Israel became divided after Rehoboam treated the people harshly. It was prophesied that Jeroboam, one of Solomon’s officials, would become king over 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jeroboam was *“a man of standing”* (1 Kings 11:28, NIV), meaning he was highly esteemed and respected in society. He must have been popular amongst the people, for *“When all the Israelites heard that Jeroboam had returned they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel”* (1 Kings 12:20, NIV). He was probably appointed king because the people believed he was the best person to lead them forward, much like how we elect politicians to lead us today. Whatever it was that Jeroboam offered, he must have been popular and well liked in society. At the time of his kingship, many generations had passed since God had established His pattern with Israel through the Levitical priesthood. After becoming king, Jeroboam feared the people would abandon him and revert to giving their loyalty back to King Rehoboam, who was from the family line of King David. Jeroboam reacted to this by changing the pattern God established for His people.

“Jeroboam thought to himself, “The kingdom will now likely revert to

*the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.” After seeking advice, **the king made two golden calves.** He said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt...” Jeroboam built shrines on high places and **appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites”** (1 Kings 12:26-28,31, NIV).*

Jeroboam began to yield to the pattern of the world when he deviated from the pattern established by God. Why? His fears and actions suggest he *“loved praise from men more than praise from God”* (John 12:43, NIV), similar to some Jewish leaders in the New Testament. Perhaps the Levitical priesthood seemed outdated and after many generations it was time to “get with the times” and create an equal-opportunity system for all God’s people. However, it was God’s pattern that was established for the benefit of His people that Jeroboam deviated from. God then sent a prophet to warn Jeroboam of his ways (Numbers 13).

*“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his **evil** ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. **This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth”** (1 Kings 13:33-34, NIV).*

Evil is a strong word in today’s culture. It implies something as being wicked, horrendous or malicious. In its most simple definition though, “evil” is anything that is not in accordance with the righteous way of the Lord. “Evil” does not have to be a horrendous and malicious act, but if it opposes the Lord’s way, then it is an evil way. Evil may be difficult to identify at times, *“And no wonder; for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light”* (2 Corinthians 11:14, NIV).

Israel’s downfall was a result of walking in all the sinful ways of Jeroboam, which included idolatry (2 Kings 17:16) and in deviating from the pattern God had set for them.

*“For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and **made them sin a great sin.** For the children of Israel walked in **all the sins** of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets”* (2 Kings 17:21-23, KJV).

You can read through the remainder of 1 Kings and 2 Kings and see how the kings of Israel did not turn away from the sins (plural) of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit. The “great sin” that “tore Israel from the house of David” was following King Jeroboam in his disobedience to God, which included engaging in idol worship and in abandoning the pattern God had established for them. The result was Israel’s downfall and removal from the presence of the Lord.

Shifting from history to the present time, it is safe to say that this current move of the Spirit is not the first move of the Spirit in modern history.

There have been other tremendous movings of the Holy Spirit amongst spiritually hungry people. Over time, however, they reverted back into the pattern of the world from which they had been pulled out. There is a time for correction and there is a time when God realizes he has to start anew. God started anew in 1948 through some spiritually hungry people and ultimately revealed many principal truths to His people in this current move of the Spirit. One of those principles is the pattern of the New Testament church. I won't review those principles here as there is already much literature on the subject. At the beginning of this move of the Spirit, God knew that in the beginning we would not be perfect although perfection or spiritual maturity is His goal for us. He has promised that if we faithfully live according to all the parts of His pattern, we will one day reach that perfection (spiritual maturity) that we call sonship.

Looking back again to the Old Testament, I do not completely understand why God established that only the Levites were to serve as priests. I'm sure I do not yet understand all of the wonderful aspects of the New Testament pattern for the Church. However, I have a choice as to how I walk going forward:

- 1 I can ask the Holy Spirit to continue to increase my understanding and appreciation of His will, His way and His pattern as I continue to walk in the revelation I have, or,
- 2 I can set aside His will, His way, and His pattern and just walk according to my own natural understanding.

After all, the choice is mine. One thing the Lord has blessed me with is a free will; the power to choose, and with this free will, the choice between the two always has been, and will forever remain, mine.

Many times, the Israelites were led astray and sinned, and through the sacrifices offered on behalf of the people by the Levite priests, in accordance with God's pattern, He forgave the sins of the people and re-established them. He knew that His people would never be perfected through this system of animal sacrifices, but it pointed to the sacrifice of His perfect Son, Jesus, that through belief in Him and walking according to His pattern for the church, we might reach that perfection that has always been His goal for man.

After many more generations had passed and many more kings of Israel had reigned and followed the ways of Jeroboam, the Israelites were ultimately exiled. Even though:

"The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers" (2 Kings 17:13, NIV).

"They imitated the nations around them although the Lord had ordered them, 'Do not do as they do'" (2 Kings 17:15, NIV).

Of all the sins of Israel, the "great sin" that led to their exile was simply the sin of disobedience to all of God's commands which included abandoning the pattern that had been established by God; a pattern He established for the benefit of His people. The pattern and practices that emerged over time often resembled the ones established by God, but they were changed to serve Jeroboam and the desires of Israel. Even today, the diverting from God's pattern can be a subtle and insidious process.

It is common and very easy over time to stray from the patterns that have been established by God. This is easy to see all through society today. For example, a client or acquaintance will often ask me "Are you dating anybody?" Almost every instance is followed by, "Do you live together yet?" This is how the world gauges how well or serious the relationship is. Many Christians have taken a stance in this department according to the pattern God has established for marriage and ultimately the home that follows. We must actively choose not to change His pattern of the home and marriage, but rather choose to uphold it and walk in it, because that is where His anointing and blessing are bestowed. Likewise, let us also choose to carefully uphold the pattern of the church. God knows we will not be perfect as we are learning to walk according to His pattern, but He has promised to eventually perfect us as we walk according to the pattern. As we walk in His will, His anointing and blessing will rest upon us.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2, NIV). †

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