

***Glimpses of Our God***  
***The Holiness of God***

Lesson #5 for February 4, 2012

Scriptures: Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Genesis 2:3; Job 42:5,6; Luke 5:1-11; Luke 4:31-36; Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4:8,9

1. This lesson is about the holiness of God and what that might imply about our relationship to Him. What does it mean to be holy? Or sacred? Or sanctified? *Holy* means “set apart.”
2. Not until the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was God’s existence questioned. There were no other explanations for origins except God. While different cultures and religions may have had different ideas about God, God’s existence was assumed. In Scripture there is no question about the existence of God. However, there is an extensive discussion in many different settings about what God is like and how He relates to us—His sinful, fallen children.
3. God is love. (1 John 4:8,16) Does that include “tough love”? God is good. He tells us to call Him “Daddy” (“Abba”) or Father. (Romans 8:15) He is also patient, tender, forgiving, and caring. But, He is also holy. What does that mean?
4. A careful study of church history will reveal that fallen human beings have loved to create their own “gods.” In essence, they worship their ideas about God. Do we? Voltaire once said, “God made man in His image, and man has returned the compliment.” (See *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, January 29, 2012)
5. How do we develop a correct picture of God? Are we sure that we have not just constructed for ourselves a picture that we like? Isn’t that what many churches have done? Why do we prefer “the larger view”? Why do we prefer our understanding of the great controversy? Is it because this paradigm allows us to fit together the most consistent understanding of Scripture without leaving out any part of Scripture? Creation? The flood?
6. Are we guilty—as so many in the past have been—of judging the Bible by our ideas? Or, do we judge our ideas by the Bible? Do we take all of the Bible and try to fit it together?
7. The inspiration of Scripture is a subject that has consumed some people and intrigued others for generations. The Old Testament is full of passages with statements like, “Thus says the LORD.” Are those direct quotations from God? Of course, we must recognize that if they are quotations from God, God is still limited by speaking to us in human language.
8. While the New Testament does not have so many direct quotations from the unseen God, the Gospels are the story of God on this earth. And all of it needs to be translated into a language we know. Repeatedly, the New Testament authors quoted from the Old Testament, assuming the reader will regard those Old Testament passages as authoritative.
9. Some dispensational Christians believe that the God of the Old Testament is fierce, harsh, and angry while the God of the New Testament is loving and kind. Read 1 Corinthians 10:4 and Luke 24:44. In these verses we are told that Jesus was, in fact, the God of the Old Testament. So, we must integrate our understanding of the Old Testament with the New Testament. Jesus was the One Who sent the flood, ordered the killing of the firstborn, etc.
10. So, why would a Person like God the Son, Jesus Christ, come down on Mount Sinai in such awesome power and later sit quietly while giving the Sermon on the Mount with children in His lap—children who loved to reach up and kiss His face? Could these be the same Person?

Our Saviour awed men by His purity and elevated morality, while His love and gentle benignity inspired them with enthusiasm. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him; even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His lap and to kiss that pensive face, benignant with love. (3T 422.1; GW 261.3)

11. We cannot have a correct picture of God until we find a way to integrate all of Scripture into that picture. There is a good way to put all of this together. But, no human recognized that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament until after He had returned to heaven!
12. To see what New Testament writers and apostles thought about the Old Testament passages, see Matthew 4:4; 11:10; Mark 1:2; 7:6; John 12:14,15; Acts 13:33; Romans 3:10; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:16; 1 Corinthians 5:7. It should be clear from these passages that the authors of the New Testament and Jesus Himself placed absolute trust in the writings of the Old Testament.
13. Mark Twain is quoted as saying: "It's not the parts of the Bible that I don't understand that bother me; it's the parts that I do!" Do some parts of the Bible bother us? Are they very hard for us to understand? How should we respond to portions of Scripture which puzzle us? (See 1 Corinthians 13:12)
14. To get a little better idea of what it means to be holy, consider Genesis 2:3. The Sabbath was set apart from other days of the week. The time during the Sabbath day is not essentially different, but it was blessed and set apart. It was intended to be a time of celebration of what God has done for us and wants to do with us. In our defense of the Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists have spent a lot of time trying to describe why we think the Sabbath is important. That is an excellent exercise. It is clear that there is no explanation for the seven-day week except for creation and creation week. For example, there are no celestial bodies which make seven-day cycles. So, if the Sabbath is set apart as sacred by God, what does that teach us about sacredness or holiness?
15. Clearly, to be holy means to be set apart for special purposes. (See Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 86:8-11; 99:1-3; Isaiah 40:25.)
16. So, what is the difference between us and God? God is sinless; we are sinners. God is the Creator; we are created. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent; we are none of those things. God is good; we tend to be evil. What other differences can you think of? How should these differences make us feel? Do they require action on our part? What has God done to try to bridge those differences?
17. The story of Job is like the history of the great controversy in miniature. God declared Job "blameless" and "upright," a man who was careful not to do evil. (Job 1:1,8) But, then came the council in heaven when they discussed Job's condition. Satan was allowed to do everything possible to destroy Job's faith in God. God allowed all of that. And when it was all over, Job said: "In the past I knew only what others had told me, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. So I am ashamed of all I have said and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5,6, GNB)
18. But, God was not finished talking. Job 42:7 (GNB) says:

After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you did not speak the truth about me,

the way my servant Job did.”

God repeated that statement in verse 8. Wouldn't you like to have God say that about you? Does this suggest that our relationships, even with other humans, tend to grow deeper and more meaningful when we have passed through times of stress together?

19. Consider some of the other prophets who had direct encounters with the holiness of God. While in Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel had a vision of God. (Ezekiel 1) While fleeing from his brother Esau and after deceiving his father Isaac, Jacob had a night vision of the ladder going up to heaven. (Genesis 28:16,17) Moses had repeated encounters with God. (Exodus 19-34) Daniel received major visions and was protected by God. How do you understand Daniel 10:5-8? What was the angel's response? The angel said, "Stand up, I want to talk to you!" (See Daniel 10:10-12) While God's holiness seems to be awesome and people react with fear and trembling, God prefers to have us relate to Him as a friend; He prefers to talk to us face-to-face. (Consider Moses: See Numbers 12:8 and Deuteronomy 34:10-12; John 15:15)
20. Why did people react that way when approached by an angel or by God Himself? Isaiah specifically mentioned his unworthiness. (Isaiah 6:1-3) Were those prophets overwhelmed by God's glory? What impressed them most? Try to imagine yourself in a similar situation. What do you think you would do?
21. Turn now to the New Testament. Surely, we do not believe that there is a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. God Himself tells us that He does not change. (Malachi 3:6)
22. Read Luke 5:1-11. Why do you think Peter reacted the way he did?

In Jesus he saw One who held all nature under His control. The presence of divinity revealed his own unholiness. Love for his Master, shame for his own unbelief, gratitude for the condescension of Christ, above all, the sense of his uncleanness in the presence of infinite purity, overwhelmed him. While his companions were securing the contents of the net, Peter fell at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—Ellen G White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 246.
23. Adam and Eve loved to meet with God and be in His presence. It was their favorite thing to do. What has changed? Are we incapable of comprehending the real sinfulness of sin? Do we understand what sin has done to us?
24. Read Luke 4:31-36. In this passage and in several other passages, even the demons recognized who Christ was. Were they compelled to make those statements when in the presence of Deity? Did they make those statements to try to convince people that Jesus was somehow in cahoots with them?
25. Read Revelation 4:8,9. We know that God is love. (1 John 4:8,16) But, in Revelation the angels surrounding the throne of God cry, "Holy, holy, holy" rather than "Love, love, love," or "Good, good, good," or some other attribute of God. Why do you think that is? Heaven rejoices and celebrates God's holiness every time a sinner repents, etc. (Luke 15:7)
26. Are there any indications in any of the encounters between God and human beings that God is actually frightening? Or, is He just awesome? We certainly do not see people jumping up and down and shouting praise and celebration because they have had a vision of God. Why

is that? Do they see the very distinct differences between us as sinful beings and the holiness of God? Is that the most impressive thing?

27. Twice during His ministry, Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem. Read about the first incident of that described in *Desire of Ages* p. 157,158. People took sacrifices to the temple because they believed that despite all the corruption and fraud going on there, it was the only way to have their sins forgiven. But, when the true God, Jesus Christ, appeared, He raised His hand while holding some small cords; and all the guilty merchants and moneychangers fled for their lives.
28. Ellen White described this and similar experiences with these words, "Divinity flashed through humanity." What does that mean? Three years later when Christ cleansed the temple again, the sick did not run, the children did not run, they were not frightened. Why the difference? (DA 608)
29. Our lesson suggests that we can confidently approach the throne of God because of "Christ's cleansing blood." What does that mean? Does it mean that God was not friendly before Jesus offered the atoning sacrifice? If we try to approach God today without claiming "Christ's cleansing blood," will God reject us?
30. How would you describe the difference between sacred, holy, and sanctified versus secular?
31. We have two institutions still present with us today that were given to man before the time of sin on this earth: marriage and the Sabbath. (*Adventist Home* p. 341) God recognized our need for these two institutions for the stability of society and our relationship to Him.
32. Jesus was never married; so, we cannot look to Him as an example for marriage per se. What can we learn about the keeping of the Sabbath from the ways that Jesus kept the Sabbath?
33. There are some examples in the Old Testament of those who did not take God's holiness seriously. Consider the story of Nadab and Abihu. (Leviticus 10:1-11) Although they had been through a lot in preparation for the dedication of the tabernacle and even were allowed to go up on the side of the mountain where God had come down, these men did not take God's holiness seriously. The result was a disaster. God needed to make it very clear to all the children of Israel that His requirements are serious.
34. Are we taking God's requirements seriously today? Are we respectful of all of His commandments. Do we carefully observe the Sabbath from sundown to sundown? Or, will some of us be like Nadab and Abihu when Jesus comes again?

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