

## Holy Is Your Name

Many passages talk about the holiness of God. These days, however, holiness is more of a religious term. Its basic meaning is: set apart, or separate. So, something that is set apart is separated from common things is holy. It is holy because it is different. However, the idea of being different is not simply that it is not *like* other things, but that there is value or character that makes it separate. In a literal sense we could say that museum artifacts are *holy*, that is, they have been separated from common objects. The artifacts have been separated because of their value as a piece of history or for the purpose of providing some sort of enlightenment to the viewer. These special objects are guarded from casual contact; protected from the elements; and given a place of honor in a museum. Visitors are expected to give the artifacts proper respect.

God is holy. He is deserving of honor and respect (awe). We show our honor, not by admiring God as an artifact as in a museum, but by our worship and dedication to his ways. He is holy, not because of his place in history, but because he is, by his very nature, separate from mankind. He is holy; man is common. He is righteous; man is unrighteous. He is eternal; man is finite. He is creator; man is created. Many more contrasts could be made to illustrate his holiness.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he taught them that the name of God is holy (hallowed). It is not enough to accept that God himself is holy; his name, also, is holy. At some point in their history the Jews decided to stop saying the *name* of God. They reasoned that if they did not say God's *name* then they would not break the command:

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

At some point, the Jews put God's name up on a shelf as if it were an artifact. That was not God's intent.

When God's name was spoken to Israel for the first time, it meant something. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob was about to deliver them from Egypt. He is *The One Who Is*: "I AM Who I AM." You may have seen the English representation of the Hebrew letters that comprise the name of God: YHWH. (No one knows what the vowel sounds are since they were not written. Some have suggested Yehweh or Yahweh as likely pronunciations for God's name.)

God expected his *name* to be spoken, but with reverence and honor. His *name* is not to be like the names of false or foreign gods. His *name* is above them, because he is above all others. His *name* is not a common name like that of any man or woman throughout history. His *name* is not for jokes or riddles or other humor. His *name* was not reserved for exclamations as an idle expression of surprise; or to be shouted when experiencing sharp pain or anger. God's *name* has meaning and it uniquely identifies God as deity; one who is self-sufficient, eternal in existence, and changeless. No other single descriptor is capable of encompassing his identity. His is not a "name that must not be spoken" but one that must be revered, because the *name* can only be attributed to God himself, for no man can make such a claim as does the *name* of God: I AM.

**Our Father in heaven . . . HOLY IS YOUR NAME.**

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