

B2 - God

Study 1 - The Holiness of God

BIBLE READING:

Isaiah 6: 1-8

KEY VERSE:

**“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory!”**

Isaiah 6: 3

When we consider God as Creator, we immediately think of His power and wisdom. We must realise, however, that He possesses many other qualities, such as holiness and righteousness.

HOLINESS DEFINED

What does ‘the holiness of God’ mean? Basically, it means that He is absolutely pure; He is totally separated from every form of sin. In His being and nature, He stands apart from all evil. We think, say and do things which are impure, but GOD cannot, for HE IS HOLY. (See **Exodus 15: 11**)

MAN
(SINFUL)

GOD
(HOLY)

HOLINESS REVEALED

It was the holiness of God which was impressed upon the mind of the young prophet Isaiah, in the vision described in the Bible Reading. Just a little while earlier, he had witnessed King Uzziah suffering and dying from leprosy. (**2 Chronicles 26: 16-23**) Now, in sharp contrast to that loathsome disease, God was showing His prophet how pure and holy He is. The effect of the vision was to make Isaiah feel like a ‘spiritual leper’, so great was his sense of being sinful in the sight of God. It is the same today; when we understand how holy God is, we discover how impure and unclean we are!

HOLINESS REFLECTED

In Old Testament times, God’s chosen people was the nation of Israel. To them He made known His laws, and it was His desire that they should reflect His holiness, by the kind of lives they lived. He said to them, **“You shall therefore be holy; for I am holy”**. (**Leviticus 11: 44**)

He wanted them to be different from the other nations, in the sense that He had chosen them to be **“His treasured possession”**. (**Deuteronomy 7: 6**) Just as a mirror portrays whatever object is held before it, so Israel was to ‘mirror’ God’s holiness to surrounding nations.

But being different is never easy! The nation of Israel failed miserably in their God-given role of reflecting His holiness. Instead of being ‘different’, Israel became ‘like’ the heathen, and fell into idolatry and immorality of all kinds. By the time of Isaiah, sinfulness so characterised God’s people that the prophet said, **“I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”**. (**verse 5**) He meant that the whole nation had become polluted by the ‘spiritual leprosy’ of sin!

HOLINESS EXPRESSED

When individuals and nations disregard God’s standards, punishment is the inevitable consequence. This is an aspect of God’s holiness which we may be inclined to overlook. Because He is holy, He cannot turn a blind eye upon those who defy His laws - He MUST punish sin! For this reason, the Old Testament contains numerous examples of how Israel came repeatedly under the judgment of God. **“The wrath of the Lord”** is one form in which the holiness of God is expressed. **2 Chronicles 36: 16** relates an incident during King Zedekiah’s reign when God’s wrath was aroused against His people.

HOLINESS EXPERIENCED

Today, God’s will is that every believer in the Lord Jesus should live a holy life. To be a Christian requires us to turn FROM everything which we know to be displeasing to God, and to turn TO Him, in whole-hearted commitment. This is the highway to the highest and best in life! **“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, HOLY and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”** (**Romans 12: 1**)



B2 - God

Study 2 - The Justice of God

BIBLE READING:

**Psalm 11: 1-7; Psalm 33: 5;
Psalm 89: 14-18**

KEY VERSE:

**“For the Lord is righteous, He loves
righteous deeds.”**

Psalm 11: 7

A RIGHTEOUS GOD

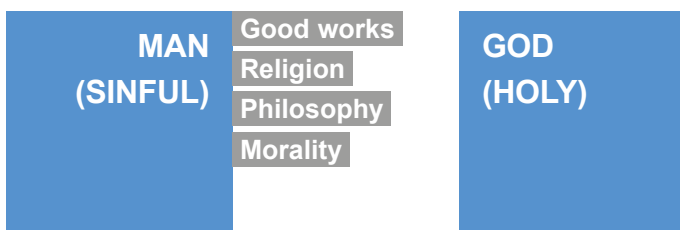
A holy God - pure and sinless - must necessarily be a righteous God, absolutely fair in all His dealings with men. The laws which Moses received on Mount Sinai for the nation of Israel, (**Exodus 20**) proved God's concern for His people's behaviour. It was His desire that every level of society should be treated fairly and justly. **Deuteronomy 32: 4** provides a description of God's character - **“The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of faithfulness and without iniquity; just and upright is He.”** The Ten Commandments, given by God, had made clear what is right and what is wrong. God had covered every contingency. The laws of the nation had the firmest and best of foundations - they came from the hand of God. (**See Deuteronomy 4: 5-8**)

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

But as with all nations, injustices crept into the national life of Israel. God had said that they were not to pervert justice, nor were they to show partiality to the poor, or favouritism to the great. Instead they were to act fairly towards their neighbours in every circumstance. (**Leviticus 19: 15**)

When justice was perverted, God sent His prophets (men who brought God's Word to the people) to pronounce His hatred of what He saw. They condemned, in the strongest language, the behaviour of greedy and selfish men. The people's injustices demanded action from a holy and just God. Through His prophet Jeremiah, He said, **“Shall I not punish them for these things?”** (**Jeremiah 5: 28- 29**) And punish them He did!

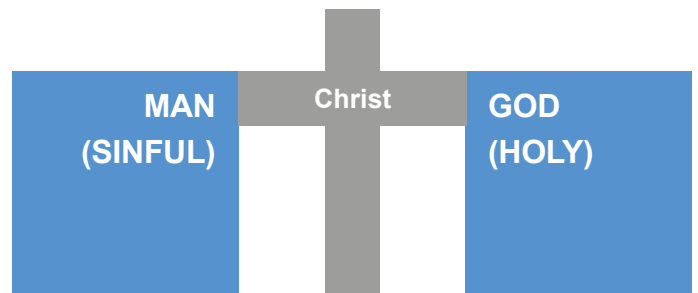
THE JUDGMENT OF GOD



So the case for fair and just behaviour was established by God. **“There is no authority except from God.”** (**Romans 13: 1**) Like many things in this sinful world, some governments are unjust and unfair. They resemble those mentioned in **Jeremiah 5**, but God is not deceived! One of the wisest men who ever lived, King Solomon, ended his book, Ecclesiastes, with these words, **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil”.** (**Ecclesiastes 12: 14**)

This is supported by Paul's teaching when he wrote of **“that day when... God judges the secrets of men...”**. (**Romans 2: 16**) Actions, words, even secret thoughts - God knows them all. Sooner or later each one of us has to answer for them all! Even now, the teaching of the New Testament is that God has put persons in positions of authority and He expects them to rule justly. God expects all who are Christians to submit to the 'powers that be'. (**See Romans 13: 1,2**)

So what about your sins, secret or otherwise? God is holy and cannot go against His character. Therefore He must judge our wrong-doing. We have all sinned, we all stand condemned and we all deserve to be punished. (**Romans 6: 23**) But God's love and mercy and the self-sacrificing love of His Son make it possible for Him to forgive us. The Lord Jesus Christ has been punished instead of us. God **“has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”**. (**Isaiah 53: 6**) Judgment is inevitable (**Revelation 20: 12**), but forgiveness is available for all those who come to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His gift of deliverance from the anger of a just and holy God. (**John 3: 17, 18**)



Answer Sheet

B2 - God

Study 1 - The Holiness of God

Name: _____ Return address on back of answer sheet

Address: _____

1. Answer the following questions:

- a) Express in your own words what is meant by the 'holiness of God.' _____

- b) What effect did the vision of God's holiness have on Isaiah? _____

- c) In what way would a clear understanding of 'the holiness of God' affect a person today? _____

/5

2. In the vision, the live (or burning) coal from the altar was laid upon Isaiah's lips. This was a symbol to teach him that cleansing from sin is only available through a sacrifice being offered. Read *Hebrews 9: 26-28* and *1 Peter 2: 24*.

- a) Of what value is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus to us? _____

- b) Write out the words which the seraph (angel) said to Isaiah, as he laid the coal upon his mouth. _____

- c) In what way was Israel 'special'? (*see Deuteronomy 7: 8*) _____

- d) What did God intend Israel to show to the surrounding nations? _____

/8

3. Answer the following questions:

- a) What is the reaction of the Holy God to our sin? _____

- b) Give one clear illustration, from Bible history, of this reaction. _____

/4

4. "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God..." What do you think is involved in this statement?

/2

5. Write either TRUE or FALSE after each statement:

- a) Isaiah had no need of being cleansed from sin. _____
- b) King Uzziah died of a fever. _____
- c) In Old Testament times, Israel was God's chosen race. _____
- d) The Holy God must punish sin. _____
- e) Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ should not indulge in sinful practices. _____

/5

THINK: Think about the holiness of God and the contrast with our sinfulness. This makes what He has done for us all the more amazing! Spend time praising and thanking Him.

TOTAL = _____ /25

Answer Sheet

B2 - God

Study 2 - The Justice of God

1. Read *Psalm 89: 14* again and write the four characteristics of God which are mentioned in this verse.

 /2

2. Use the study notes to help you draw a line between the names of these people to the words spoken by each of them:

Isaiah

"God will judge the secrets of men..."

Solomon

"The Lord is righteous, He loves righteous deeds."

Jeremiah

"God will bring every deed into judgment..."

The Psalmist

"Shall I not punish them...?"

Paul

"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

 /5

3. In the Old Testament God gave The Ten Commandments.

- a) Who were they given to? _____
 b) At what place were they given? _____
 c) Why do you think God gave these commandments? _____

 /5

4. Answer these questions:

- a) What is God's priority for His people in **Deuteronomy 16: 20**? _____
 b) Find three ways in **Leviticus 19: 15** in which God's people were told to act justly. _____
 c) Give an example of unfair treatment or injustice which exists in the world today. _____

 /5

5. Explain in your own words, why we believe that sin cannot for ever go unpunished.

 /4

6. How is it possible for a just and righteous God to forgive sinners?

- a) Refer to the two diagrams in the study to explain the only way this is possible.

 b) According to **Acts 13: 38, 39** how can we, as individuals, receive God's forgiveness?

 /4

THINK: Spend time praising God for who He is, using the truths about His character in **Deuteronomy 32: 4**.

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

B2 - God

Study 3 - The Love of God

1. Use *Deuteronomy 7: 6-9* to find one reason why God did not choose the Israelites and two reasons why He did choose them.

 /6

2. Explain what we learn from David's confession in *Psalms 51: 1* about the following:

a) His sense of guilt. _____

b) God's love for him. _____

 /4

3. Read *Psalms 103: 8-13*.

a) List three ways in which God shows His love to us. _____

b) What picture is given of God's love in **verse 13**? _____

 /8

4. Read *1 John 4: 9-11* again.

a) What is the greatest proof of God love to us? _____

b) What should our response be? _____

 /3

5. Give examples of how a Christian today could show the love of Christ to:

a) Friends _____

b) An elderly neighbour _____

 /4

THINK: Listen to the song "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene" and meditate on God's love.

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

B2 - God

Study 4 - The Mercy and Grace of God

1. Write IN YOUR OWN WORDS definitions of mercy and grace.

□ /4

2. Read *Jonah chapter 3* and answer these questions:

a) What was Jonah's message to the people? _____

b) How did the Ninevites react to his message? _____

c) As a result, what did they learn about God? _____

□ /6

3. Read *John 3: 16* again.

a) The first part of the verse tells us two things which God has done. Write them here:

i) God _____

ii) God _____

b) The second part of the verse makes two promises to anyone who "**believes**". Write them here:

i) They _____

ii) They have _____

□ /4

4. Read *Romans 6: 23* and explain how this verse illustrates God's grace.

□ /2

5. Read what Paul says about himself in *1 Timothy 1: 12-16*, then answer: -

a) How does he describe himself before his conversion? _____

b) What does he say in **verse 14** about "**the grace of our Lord**"? _____

c) What reason does he give in **verse 16** for having received mercy? _____

□ /6

6. The experience of God's grace in our lives should affect how we live. From *Titus 2: 11-12* give three examples of the way in which a Christian should live.

□ /3

THINK: Listen to the song "Amazing Grace" and reflect on the grace that God has shown to you.

Return your completed answer sheet to:

TOTAL = □ /25 UNIT TOTAL = □ /100

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B2 - God

Study 3 - The Love of God

BIBLE READING:

1 John 4: 7-19

KEY VERSE:

“We have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him.”

1 John 4: 16

GOD IS LOVE

“God is love”! These simple words describe God’s very ‘heart’ - what He is now, always has been, and never will cease to be! The wonderful message of the Bible is that His love has not remained hidden. He has shown it in many ways.

GOD’S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

Hundreds of years before the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God had made a promise to their ancestor, Abraham, that He would make of them a great nation. (**Genesis 12: 1-2**) God, who is always faithful to His promises, did as He said. Over many centuries, He brought into existence the nation of Israel and gave them Canaan - ‘The Promised Land’. Towards the end of his life, Moses reminded the people that God had not chosen them because they had the makings of a strong and powerful nation, but because He had loved them and was keeping His promise to Abraham. (**Deuteronomy 7: 6-9**)

GOD’S LOVE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

One man who wrote a great deal about God’s love was David. Different versions of the Bible translate the word he uses for love as ‘lovingkindness’, ‘steadfast love’, ‘mercies’, and ‘goodness’. (**See Psalm 31: 7; 36: 7; 103: 8, and 144: 2**) Throughout all his life, whether as an unknown shepherd at Bethlehem or as an acclaimed king in Jerusalem, he acknowledged God’s great love. His life may have been very different from ours, but when we read his songs, we realise that in many ways he was someone to whom we can relate today. Success, failure, fear, joy, love, rejection - throughout it all, David clung to the enduring, faithful love of God and never more so than when he had an affair with another man’s wife. (**2 Samuel 11**) When he realised how terrible this great sin was, he cried, **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love . . . blot out my transgressions”**. (**Psalm 51: 1**)

GOD’S LOVE FOR THE WORLD

We move away now from the confines of the nation of Israel, and find that God’s love extends to the whole world. (**John 3: 16**) God’s holiness and justice demand the punishment of sin but God’s love has made it possible for sinners to be forgiven. (**See Psalm 51: 7**) We learn something of the extent and character of that love from the Old Testament. (**see Psalm 36: 5, 7**) In the New Testament, we have the supreme example of His love in a Person - in the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **“But God shows His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** (**Romans 5: 8**) God did not wait for us to come to Him; in love, He came to us, by sending His Son to be the Saviour of the world.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S LOVE

When we really value God’s love for us, we truly love Him in return. We show our love to Him by being obedient to His Word. (**John 14: 15, 23**) The Lord Jesus also taught His disciples another important truth about love. **“Love one another just as I have loved you.”** (**John 13: 34**) Divine love, as demonstrated by the Saviour, is quite simply self-sacrificing love, laying down your life for others, not pleasing yourself, but pleasing God. When we think of the extent of His love and self-sacrifice, can we do anything except surrender our lives to Him?



B2 - God

Study 4 - The Mercy and Grace of God

BIBLE READING:

Acts 26: 1, 9-19

KEY VERSE:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.”

Ephesians 2: 8

It is impossible for God to cease being holy, righteous and just. Therefore, He must punish sin. It is equally true, however, to say that His love towards sinners never ceases! His wonderful love includes both His mercy and His grace. These can be defined as follows:

GOD’S MERCY

- withholds the punishment we deserve.

GOD’S GRACE

- gives us special kindness, which we do not deserve.

MERCY AND GRACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Throughout the Old Testament the twin themes of mercy and grace are repeated to both individuals and to nations. In the days of great wickedness prior to the flood, God’s grace extended to Noah. (**Genesis 6: 5-8**) Another example is found in the experience of the Ninevites, who were saved from destruction, when they believed God’s message through Jonah. They proved that the Lord is **“a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love”**. (**Jonah 4: 2**)

God’s justice and love were constantly declared by the prophets to Israel and the nations, but often their hearers were not interested. They were not willing to change their ways and consequently, ended their lives under the judgment of God. Yet the offer of mercy was always there, as shown by Isaiah’s words, **“Let the wicked forsake his way... let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion (mercy) on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”**. (**Isaiah 55: 7**)

MERCY AND GRACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Our sin has made a gulf between ourselves and a holy God which can never be overcome by anything which we do. Without God’s way of salvation, punishment is inevitable! But the good news is that **“God so loved the world...”**. (**John 3: 16**) This verse is a simple and clear description of God’s way of salvation - His offer of mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

MERCY means we shall not perish, even though we deserve to be punished for our sins, for the Lord Jesus Christ has been punished instead of us.

GRACE means we have everlasting life, as a wonderful and undeserved gift from God. It is ours, the very moment we believe on Him and accept His offer.

MERCY AND GRACE IN THE LIFE OF PAUL

One man who experienced God’s mercy and grace to the full, was the apostle Paul. (See Bible Reading) He was a strict orthodox Jew, who hated Christians and did all he could to destroy both them and their faith. He was actually on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus with orders to arrest the Christians there, when he was arrested - by the Lord Jesus! At that moment, as he came face to face with the risen Lord, his whole attitude to Him was completely changed! Following this remarkable conversion, Paul became one of Christ’s most devoted followers. Looking back at this great spiritual work in his life, he said, **“I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me...”**. (**1 Timothy 1: 13-14**)

His future work was to take the good news of God’s mercy and grace - forgiveness of sins and eternal life - to both Jews and Gentiles. Not only was Paul forgiven for his terrible persecution of Christians, but God also gave him the gifts and opportunities to become the greatest teacher and preacher of the faith he had once set out to destroy.

Paul was a man with a deep understanding of human nature, but he never forgot that it was only by God’s grace that he could accomplish anything worthwhile for God. (**See 1 Corinthians 15: 10**)

God’s grace and mercy should produce in us a response of gratitude which makes us want to please Him. God is loving and gracious, but He is also holy and just. Therefore, we should endeavour to live lives that reflect in some degree the characteristics of the God in whom we have believed. **“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (mercy), and to walk humbly with your God?”** (**Micah 6: 8**)



This is the second of four units on **God**.