

What is Holy?

Who decides? Men or God?

Seven Propositions on Holiness

1. God is holy.

God is set apart as holy (Lev. 20:26; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 12:10), infinite and majestic in holiness (Exod. 15:11; Isa. 6:1-5), pure (Hab. 1:13), awesome and to be feared (Deut. 7:21; 10:17; 28:58; 1 Chr. 16:25; Ps. 47:2; 76:7, 11; 96:4).

2. True Christians are holy.

The church (Gk. *ekklesia*) means “the called out ones”—those who have been called out of the world, called out from the enslavement of the sinful world, the flesh, and the devil, to serve God and be “slaves of Christ.”

Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus become God’s holy temple. The Lord “sets us apart” from the world and “consecrates us” unto Him.

Through justification, God looks upon us as holy (sanctified) as a result of Christ’s perfect holiness and righteousness, which has been imputed to us by faith alone.

Through progressive sanctification, we are progressively becoming more holy (more like Christ), putting off sin and putting on Christlikeness.

Through glorification, we one day will be perfectly holy in heaven.

3. Only God can declare something to be holy or unholy; He does so through His revealed will, the Bible (Old and New Testaments) (Exod. 3:5; 12:16; 20:8; Isa. 44:8; 45:6, 21; Acts 10:28; 1 Cor. 7:14).

4. The Bible alone is sufficient for the church’s doctrine, and nothing may be added to or subtracted from it (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 3:5, 9; Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2; 12:32-13:5).

5. Churches, apart from God’s Word, do not have the authority to declare something to be holy.

6. It is sinful to declare something common (i.e., not holy), if God says it is holy.

7. It is sinful to call something holy, which God does not call holy.

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6a

“The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either **1** expressly set down in Scripture, or **2** by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 2:2).

Here we see some important applications of the Biblical principles of what is holy or sacred for the Christian, for the faithful believer:

Holy People

The Bible teaches that all Christians are “saints” or holy people, a holy nation (Exod. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9).

- Do not subtract, saying only some Christians are “holy,” those whom a church declares to be holy on account of their good works or obedience to manmade requirements.

Holy Symbols and Seals

The Bible teaches that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments or holy signs and seals of the new covenant, ordained by Christ. They are sacred ordinances of the church because Christ Himself established them; He set them apart; He said to “do this” (Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24).

- Do not subtract by saying that Christ's ordinance are not holy. Do not add by saying there are seven sacraments, which the church has ordained by tradition. Do not claim that the church has the power to declare holy other objects, symbols, or things, whether by tradition, custom, or any other power of man.

Holy Land

The Bible teaches that under the old covenant, the nation of Israel was a holy nation as long as God's glory dwelt there. God's glory departed from Israel as a result of their rebellion (Ezek. 10:18). Under the new covenant, all God's people, Jew and Gentile, are set apart as holy and are citizens of the holy land known as the heavenly Jerusalem, heaven itself (Phil. 3:20; Heb 12:22). Wherever God's saints are gathered together, that place is holy because they are God's holy temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19), not because the building or ground where they are is holy.

- Do not add by saying that the modern nation of Israel remains “the holy land,” even though most of its inhabitants reject Jesus, the Messiah. Do not claim that cathedrals or church buildings or temples or the sites of “relics” or the sites of

supposed apparitions of the Virgin Mary, or that the Roman Catholic church-state (Vatican City) is holy.

Holy Time

The Bible teaches that there is only one day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the gospel, which is the Lord's day (i.e., Sunday, the first day of the week, the Christian sabbath). For the church to set apart other days and seasons as holy or sacred, having no warrant in the word of God, transgresses the Fourth Commandment and profanes the holiness of the Sabbath day (Deut. 12:30-32; Gal. 4:9-11)

- Do not subtract by saying that the Fourth Commandment of the moral law of God, although established at Creation and observed throughout the Scriptures into the new covenant Church as the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10), is no longer binding on Christians.
- Do not add to God's Word by setting aside ordinary days and seasons as "holy" in order to observe some event found in Scripture or to commemorate some "saint" or some event in church history.

What is Holy? Who decides? God does.

Because He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His holiness.

We are sinful creatures. Our hearts are idol factories.

He is the Creator; we are the creature.

He is the Potter; we are the clay.

Any holiness we possess comes from God.

Holiness is the absence of sin; it is the opposite of what we are by nature.

Jesus said we must live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4).

God tells us what is holy or sacred in His word.

And God says, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).