

Relational Holiness

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Introduction:

Our quest is to answer the question, Is Holiness Relevant. Last week we defined a few terms and so we could clarify what it is we wanted to accomplish. We came up with two questions that state in detail that we hope will answer our question.

- To clarify the meaning of relevance as it relates to holiness we formulated the following question. Does HOLINESS have significant and demonstrable bearing on contemporary society, a contemporary Christian life, and to each of us personally? Is HOLINESS an appropriate phenomenon for today?
- To clarify the application of holiness specifically to contemporary society we formulated the following question. Does HOLINESS hold any significant and demonstrable bearing on the characteristics of the present modern and current society whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another? We want to know this so we will know how to tap into those organized patterns of relationships and interactions to interact with our contemporary society to bring them the Good News and show the relevance of holiness?

In order to find an answer to our question we need to take a close look at the contemporary society we live in.

A Relational Worldview:

In a car, in a bank parking lot next to a charter high school, two teenage boys are beating up on a young teenage girl. The girl gets out of the car and goes around the building and sits on a bench. One of the boys comes and sits beside her to talk as if nothing had ever happened. The police are called but the teens are gone before the police ever show up. In another incident at a McDonald's restaurant a teenage boy is pushing shoving and slapping a teenage girl around. She does not seem to have a problem with it, accepting the foul treatment as if it were the norm for a man to slap a woman around. On another afternoon, again in a McDonald's restaurant, a teenage boy is showing signs of aggressive dominance, pushing himself up against a teenage girl. She is very agitated and finally pushes him away. Throughout our culture today people are living their lives as if there were not God.

In Hosea's time Israel is in a state of lawlessness and anarchy. They have rejected God and are living life as if there were no accountability to any God. When you read the description of what was going on in Hosea's day it looks similar to what is happening in our day. Our young people have no respect for proper social restraints or restraints in their personal lives because they have not been taught the law of God. I am not talking about legalism here. I am talking about the pure and true law of God which

Jesus defined as loving God with our whole being and our neighbor as our self. Let's look at what was going on in Hosea's day in the nation of Israel. It will give us a hint about what is going on in our day.

Hosea

Hosea is the first of the Minor Prophets.

His message - The Lord loves Israel despite her sin. (Sounds like the message to the cross of Christ.)

Dates: 755 B.C. to 715 B.C.

Hosea 4:1-6 (NASB)

[4:1] Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land. [2] There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed. [3] Therefore the land mourns, (The word mourn here does not mean that they are necessarily sad because of the state of their society. This Hebrew word is use to describe a looking for the judgment of God.) And everyone who lives in it languishes, Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, And also the fish of the sea disappear. [4] Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. [5] So you will stumble by day, And the prophet also will stumble with you by night; And I will destroy your mother. [6] My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Life's Situation:

- No faithfulness [A feminine noun meaning truth. (CWS-OT)] Israel lived their lives as if there were no yesterday, as if God had never delivered them from Egyptian slavery. They ignored the truth of their past and the knowledge about their history and God's role in that history. They lived as if God had never done anything for them. WOW! How does one get to the point where they live as if God has never done anything for them? How do we today, even those of us in the organized church, live our lives as if God had never done anything for us? How do we live as if the death of Jesus on the cross and His subsequent resurrection was of no consequence to us today? This one word may be a hint to indicate why people do not think holiness is relevant today. Knowing why people might think holiness is not relevant today might help us answer our question. In fact perhaps we should also consider the question with a different wording. Perhaps we should ask the question, should holiness be relevant today?

If you have not seen the movie EXPELLED, do it this week. It will shock you to see how our contemporary society is rejecting any notion that there is any kind of God or Supreme Being. ICR certification denial is a further indication that our contemporary society is rejecting God and His truth in any and every

way that they can. But like the many generations before us, our generation will always have faithful servants of the King of kings.

As Hosea goes on he describes the results of a society that has no faithfulness, a society who has forgotten what God has done for them.

- No kindness (This is the Hebrew word for lovingkindness, it is used 26 times in Ps 136 which gives us a clear understanding of the meaning of the word. It also gives us an understanding of the truth the Israel was ignoring which brought them into their state of lawlessness and anarchy.)

Psalms 136 (NASB)

[136:1] Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[2] Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[3] Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[4] To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
[5] To Him who made the heavens with skill,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
[6] To Him who spread out the earth above the waters,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
[7] To Him who made *the* great lights,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting:
[8] The sun to rule by day,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[9] The moon and stars to rule by night,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[10] To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[11] And brought Israel out from their midst,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[12] With a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[13] To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[14] And made Israel pass through the midst of it,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
[15] But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[16] To Him who led His people through the wilderness,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
[17] To Him who smote great kings,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

[18] And slew mighty kings,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting:
[19] Sihon, king of the Amorites,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[20] And Og, king of Bashan,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[21] And gave their land as a heritage,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[22] Even a heritage to Israel His servant,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[23] Who remembered us in our low estate,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
[24] And has rescued us from our adversaries,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
[25] Who gives food to all flesh,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
[26] Give thanks to the God of heaven,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

- No knowledge of God
- Swearing
- Deception
- Murder
- Stealing
- Adultery
- Violence
- Bloodshed followed by further bloodshed (revenge)

Result:

- My people are destroyed

Cause:

- Lack of knowledge
- Rejected knowledge
- Forgotten the law of God

Looking at Hosea is important because he shows us the state of Israel at a time when their relationship with God was in disrepair. God through Hosea is trying to get them to realize that their state of lawlessness and anarchy is a result of the lack of having a relationship with Him. That brings us to a term that may help us to understand our own culture, "relational". So we need to understand what a Relational Worldview is and what role it might play in our question, is Holiness relevant?

Talking about contemporary society in their book Relational Holiness **(RH)**, Thomas Jay Oord and Michael Lodahl define a Relational Worldview which is helpful to understand. They state...

(RH) "If we could choose one word to summarize how many people view their world today – the postmodern world – that word would be "relational". *Then they explain* a few common misconceptions about relational ways of thinking. When we talk about possessing a relational worldview, we are not talking about being sociable or friendly. To see the world in relational terms does not necessarily have to do with caring, congeniality, or getting along with others..." *They talk about how* "...it is common to talk about our world as composed of entities or subjects that exist in mutual relations, whether we're thinking of a tree, a whale, a person, a star, a proton, or anything else. ...A relational world view considers things and persons as deeply interconnected. To "be" is to be in relation. An individual's relations with others largely decide what that individual is. To say it another way, it belongs to the nature of everything that exists – *indeed of existence itself* – to be related and for those relations to affect the fundamental nature of existing things.

Then they talk about how the Relational Worldview fits the description of the Christian concept of a Relational God. This idea of a Relational God can help us understand ourselves and communicate to our contemporary society the relevance of holiness.

(RH) "It certainly fits with this postmodern emphasis upon relations for Christians to contend that God acts as an ever-present, divine influence – a necessary cause – in everyone's relational environment. Just as people affect others through relations, God as the Maker and Sustainer of all things also affects all things, all people, all the time, everywhere. There is no environment in which God is not related to others as a present, active, and loving agent."

"To think about God in this way is to believe that God is the most important actor in everyone's environment. God affects *all* others and does so in every moment. This is a significant part of what Wesley and others have called 'prevenient grace'. This grace, which is none other than God, surrounds and sustains every one of us, all the time (cf. Acts 17:28). And by this relational grace all things exist."

Acts 17:24-31 (NASB)

[24] "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; [25] nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; [26] and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, [27] that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; [28] for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' [29] "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. [30] "Therefore having overlooked the times of

ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, [31] because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

It would seem that Paul was talking in our very own contemporary society. He makes several important points that are very appropriate to modern times. He is speaking here in Athens to a group of men who have so many Gods that they have erected an altar to the "unknown god". He declares...

- God the creator of the world and all things. How appropriate to our society who's scientists struggle to convince us that there is no God. This God, Paul declares to be Lord of heaven and earth. (vs 24)
- This God is the giver and sustainer of all that exists. (vs 25-27)
- This God seeks to have relationship with His creatures. (vs 28-29)
- This God calls His creatures to repentance, to radical change. (vs 30)
- This God has set a time when everyone will face the reality of their relationship with Him and that relationship is based on the relationship of His only son who died on the cross and was raised from the dead.

Listen to Jesus explanation of what this relationship looks like.

John 17:20-26 (NASB) (Jesus prayer for His disciples the night He was arrested.)

[20] "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; [21] **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You**, that **they also may be in Us**, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

[22] "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one**, just as We are one; [23] **I in them and You in Me**, that they may be **perfected in unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. [24] "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

[25] "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; [26] and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, **so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.**"

We will discover that this relationship of unity and love is the core of God's character which is seen in His holiness. We will discover that if love is relevant then holiness is relevant.

This morning you and I come face to face with the lovingkindness of God. We see His great and deep desire for relationship with us in the death of His Son on the cross. Will we go the way that Israel went or will we turn and be faithful in our day? Will we teach our children and grandchildren to be faithful?

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