

Jesus – Hebrews 2:10-18; 4:15-5:9; Luke 4:13; Matthew 4; Mark 1:24

- ⇒ How do the references to holiness about Jesus relate to our description of holiness in the very beginning of the bible; i.e. as a relational, not as a moralistic or negative concept?

The era of the Church – 1 Cor. 6:19; Galatians 5:15-16; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 9:19-22; 10:19-22; James 1:19-21; 1 Peter 1:2, 13-16; 2:5, 9; 1 John 3:2-3

- ⇒ Can you see the call to holiness and gift of holiness/purity as relational?
- ⇒ How easy is it to moralize holiness/purity using some of these verses? What problems might follow if we read these as moral instruction?
- ⇒ What critical resources do Christians need to participate in a holy relationship with God and to express that holiness in life?

New Creation era– Ephesians 5:25-27; Rev 19:6-9; 21:2, 8-27; 22:14-15, 19

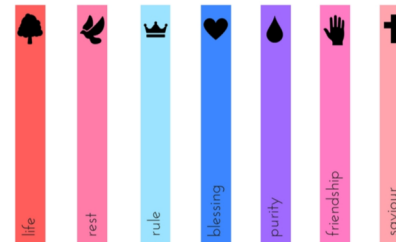
Notice the **themes of “washing”, “cleansing”**, without stain or blemish because of Christ’s sacrifice. Note with curiosity that the new city of God is the same shape as the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple.

Only the first 2 chapters of Genesis and the last 2 of Revelation describe a **world that is pure and entirely free of sin**. We have never known such a world, but we are promised we will in God’s future when Christ returns.

- ⇒ What comfort and what challenges do the promises and predictions of the era still to come have to say to you?
- ⇒ How would you use ideas of holiness and purity we’ve just studied to explain the Good News to someone else?

The members of St. Michael’s Anglican Church
acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of
this land, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and future.

7 STREAMS of GRACE



Do you remember the board game, Battleships? Opponents would each place toy ships on their own plastic grid running from A-J and 1-10 hidden behind a screen? One player calls out a coordinate like B6, and the opposing player looks at the toy ships on their hidden board to discover a “hit” or “miss”.

Our sermon series *Seven Streams of Grace* (SSoG) divides the whole Bible up into a huge rectangular grid, similar to the old board game. A large poster hangs in the church space or can be found on-line. The rows represent the “streams” or themes of God’s saving grace that run through the valley and rivers of the whole Bible, and the columns represent the “eras” (milestones in Biblical history) in which each book of the Bible is set. This Bible study is part of the journey and can be used as a devotional study, but is best suited to group discussion. Join us on this journey along the rivers of grace down the ages for life, for love and for our salvation.

• Steve Webster

Bible Study Notes for session #5 PURITY

1. Warm Up

- ⇒ We still use the words “pure” and “purity” in a forensic way today e.g. “pure spring water” or “free of impurities”. However, as far as relationships, personal qualities, values and behaviour goes nowadays, many people shy away from such descriptors. What words are preferred today when describing the behaviour or character of people? Why is that?
- ⇒ When you think of the word “holiness”, what comes to mind?
- ⇒ What great hope do couples hold about each other when they are preparing for marriage?

2. PURITY in the Old Testament

Creation era —Genesis 1:27-31; 2:23-24; 3:8-12

The Genesis narrative of the creation of the world tells us that Adam and Eve a relationship of purity with God; bestowed on them by God. In chapter 1 we learn that they were made in the image of YHWH and their freedom from sin was so complete that the writer describes them as “naked” yet without “shame”.

In chapter 3 we learn that the first casualty of the disobedience of Adam and Eve to God’s command was purity – they experienced shame and it seems that their previous innocence became indelibly stained. We learn that they “hid” themselves in fear and shame.

They could do nothing to remove the stain of sin to make their way back to the purity that once made them fit for a harmonious relationship with God, each other and the whole of creation.

- ⇒ Would God provide a way for humanity to be rid of its impurity and fit for a harmonious relationship that was holy again?

Era of Ancestors/Patriarchs – Genesis 15:5-6, 17; 18:19; 22; Leviticus 20:22-26

After God’s grace was given in choosing Abram to be God’s agent of blessing to the world by bestowing promises upon him, he learns that a new relationship with the Holy Living God has **important implications** for how one lives in God’s company; as a response to God’s covenant love (sure promises and care).

The ritual of **circumcision** is an ancient rite symbolizing separation (“cut off”) for a particular identity and relationship. It came after the blessings/promises of God and is a way of demonstrating one’s new life in the ancient world. Notice that a heart of submission shown in obedience and trust is still most important in these chapters.

Holiness = set-apartness, and cut-off-ness. Notice that it is neither negative nor moralistic in nature in its origins. Instead, holiness and purity describe a relationship like the ideal that is imagined in marriage (see Exodus 19:1-2, 5-6 and Leviticus 20:26). Holiness, then, is an **opposite to moralism** in the Bible. It is a concept of belonging; it describes God’s covenant relationship.

Andrew Olsen writes: “Legalists love moralism. Lovers love holiness.”

Holiness is what God is to us, and what we are to be toward God. God’s grace is able to “set apart” people for close relationship with Him, despite our sins.

Era of Exodus/Conquest – Exod 24:3-8; Leviticus 4; 5; 8:30; 9; 11; 16:15-17; 19:19;

- ⇒ Read some of the passages underlined above. Now see how Exodus 19:1-6; Leviticus 20:26; and Ezekiel 44:23 interpret them. What difference does it make to look at the Leviticus passages through a relational “lens”?
- ⇒ How do the commands in these passages relate to God’s blessings to Abram/Abraham back in Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15:1-6?
- ⇒ What differences did the saved/rescued people of God have over the other nations (e.g. Egypt)?
- ⇒ How might the setting apart of a people bring hope to other nations of the world (e.g. Genesis 12:3)?

Wisdom – Psalms 15; 51; 119

Psalms 119 is an acrostic, with each stanza beginning with one letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It reflects a loving servant’s wholehearted A-Z affection for Yahweh’s written words. Jesus, who survived the tempter (see Luke 4) by relying solely upon God’s trustworthy word may have used this psalm to express his holiness of relationship with God the Father.

- ⇒ Read sections of Psalm 119—What difference does it make to read them through the “eyes” of Jesus of Nazareth?
- ⇒ What clues can you find in Psalm 51 of how to “be holy” even when we know we are sinners (like King David who wrote the Psalm)?

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