

**Articles and Sermons :: Beholding The True Christ by R.A. Torrey**

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Beholding The True Christ

by R.A. Torrey

The Christ many talk about today is a figment of their own imagination. The place to see the real Christ is in the Bible. And the Holy Spirit is the One who helps us to understand Him as the Bible sets Him forth.

What do you think is the most fundamental aspect of the character of Jesus Christ? Holiness! Holiness is the first and most preeminent characteristic of Jesus Christ that appears in the Word of God. As John puts it: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). Holiness is the preeminent moral characteristic of God and it is, therefore, also the preeminent characteristic of Jesus Christ.

It is true John says in 1 John 4:8, "God is love," but John had already said something else before he said this. He had said something as the deeper foundation on which he could build the statement "God is love," and that deeper something that John had already said is found in 1 John 1:5: "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."

The whole object of the Old Testament revelation, which was to form the basis of the New Testament revelation, was to teach, elucidate and burn into the Jewish consciousness one great fundamental truth, namely, "God is holy." Holiness, I repeat, was the fundamental, preeminent, moral attribute of God and it is the fundamental, preeminent moral attribute of the real Christ.

Christ was loving? Yes. Christ was gentle and merciful? Yes. Christ was meek and humble and prayerful? Yes. But Christ was first of all holy. He, too, was "light and in Him there was no darkness at all."

The Fact of the Holiness of the Real Christ

The fact that Jesus Christ was first of all and above all else "holy" is set forth in the Bible in many ways.

First of all, the fact of Christ's holiness is clearly, directly and definitely asserted again and again. In Acts 4:27, we read: "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together," and in Acts 4:30, "By stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child Jesus." Here the holiness of Jesus is twice emphasized as the one completely descriptive moral attribute of Christ Jesus.

In Mark 1:24 we read: "Saying, let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Here a demon, a being of superior intelligence but inferior character, is compelled to declare the truth that Jesus was not only "holy" but that He was "the Holy One of God."

In Acts 3:14 we read: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." Here the Apostle Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, declares Jesus to be "the Holy One." In 1 John 2:20 we read: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The "Holy One" here, as is evident from a careful study of the passage, is Jesus Christ, and here again an inspired apostle declares Him to be "the Holy One."

Putting these passages together, it is evident that Jesus Christ was holy, absolutely holy; like Jehovah of the Old Testament, "the Holy One." In the Old Testament it is Jehovah God who is called "the Holy One." Take Isaiah alone, for example, and we find that Isaiah no less than thirty times declares Jehovah to be "the Holy One of Israel." But when the Christ really appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, when Jehovah became flesh and tabernacled in the person of Jesus Christ, it is He who is set forth as "the Holy One."

"Holy" means absolutely free from moral defilement or defect. To say that Jesus Christ is "the Holy One," absolutely holy, is to say that Jesus Christ "is light and in Him is no darkness at all." And Jesus Christ did not hesitate to say of Himself

elf, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12)

In the second place, the fact that Jesus Christ was holy, absolutely holy, is brought out in the Bible by the way in which the Bible multiplies words, phrases and figures to produce an adequate conception or impression of the absolute holiness or moral purity of Christ.

For example, we read in Hebrews 7:26, R.V.: "For such a high priest became us holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." In Hebrews 9:14, R.V., we read: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" In 1 Peter 1:19 we read: "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Again in 1 John 3:5 we read: "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we find these words: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

In Hebrews 4:15, it is put this way: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And finally in 1 John 3:3 we read: "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Note, please, how the Holy Spirit through these various inspired men piles up figures and phrases to produce upon your mind and mine something like an adequate impression of the immaculate and absolute and infinite holiness of Jesus Christ. Truly we do "Behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The dazzling white light that transformed and glorified the face and very garments of Jesus on Mount Tabor was only a faint foreshadowing of the moral glory of His infinite holiness that shone within.

And yet many, in the face of all this, dare to compare their own holiness with the holiness of Jesus Christ and say that they have already attained unto all the fullness there is in Him. When I look at Him in His infinite holiness, I wish to do what Isaiah did when he "saw the Lord high and lifted up," and heard the seraphim cry in His presence, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." I wish to cover my face and cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). I cannot but do what Job did when he no longer merely heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but his eyes saw Him— "abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

How the Holiness of Jesus Christ Manifests Itself

Now let us look at how the holiness of the real Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, manifested itself:

The holiness of Jesus Christ manifested itself, in the first place, in a love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity. We read in Hebrews 1:9: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." It is not enough to love righteousness; iniquity must be hated as well. On the other hand, it is not enough to hate iniquity; righteousness must be loved as well.

There are those who profess to love righteousness but they do not seem to hate iniquity. They are strong in applauding right but not equally strong in denouncing evil. There are also those who profess to hate sin, but they do not seem to love righteousness. They are strong in denouncing evil, but not equally strong in applauding right.

The holiness of the real Christ, our Lord Jesus, was full-orbed as well as spotless— He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

In the second place, the holiness of Jesus Christ manifested itself both in deed and word. Negatively, in His never doing sin nor speaking falsehood; positively, in His always doing what was pleasing to God and always speaking the things which pleased God.

Read, for example, 1 Peter 2:22: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Read also John 8:29: "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him."

Read Matthew 17:5: "While He yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.'" "

oud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him," and compare with that John 12:49: "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."

Note carefully two things—first, that the holiness of Christ manifested itself not merely in His deeds but also in His words. Many today who make great professions of holiness in their doings are very unholy in their sayings. In the second place, note that the holiness of Christ did not merely manifest itself negatively in not doing or speaking wrong, but also positively in His speaking and doing all that God desired—all that was right to do or speak.

A full manifestation of holiness does not consist merely in doing nothing wrong but in doing all that is right, and saying all that ought to be said. Ah, friends, it is comparatively easy never to say what we ought not to say and never to do what we ought not to do—but the really hard thing is to always do the thing God would be pleased to have us do and always to say the thing, and everything, God would have us to say.

In the third place, the holiness of Christ was manifested in constant and never-failing victory over sin. This is brought out in Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The holiness of our Lord was not the mere negative innocence that results from being shielded from contact with evil, but the positive holiness that meets evil and overcomes it.

In the fourth place, the holiness of Jesus Christ manifested itself in demanding absolute perfection of His disciples and refusing any compromise with evil. This comes out in Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The whole Sermon on the Mount is an illustration of this same thing.

Because Jesus Christ was infinitely holy, He could not be satisfied with anything less in you and me than perfect holiness. Some say, "I wish He had set the standard lower," but I rejoice and glorify God that He set the standard as high as He did. If He had set the standard lower, He would not have been the real Christ, an absolutely holy Christ.

In the fifth place, the holiness of Jesus Christ manifested itself in the stern and scathing rebuke of sinners. This we see again and again. For example, read Matthew 23:13: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." In Matthew 16:23 we read: "But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Jesus Christ laid bare the Woman of Samaria's sin in a similar unsparing way as we read in John 4:17-18: "The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." Still sterner words we read in Matthew 23:33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Why did our loving Lord rebuke sin so sternly, so scathingly, so mercilessly? Because He must. Because of what He was. Because He was holy. Because He was "light and in Him was no darkness at all." Oh, yes, He was "the meek and lowly Jesus" but not at all the meek and lowly Jesus as He is so often caricatured, looking upon sin with indulgence and excuse and allowance. No! never! Sinners He loved. Sin He hated, and rebuked sternly, scathingly, with words that shriveled as a hot fire.

In the sixth place, the holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ manifested itself in His making the greatest sacrifice in His power to save others from the sin He hated and to the righteousness He loved. This we are told over and over again. For example, in 1 Peter 2:24, we read: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

Again in 1 Peter 3:18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

Still again we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

We read again in a most remarkable passage, Philippians 2:6-8: "Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, th

e death of the cross" (translation).

The clear meaning of this is that in order to save men from the sin He hated to the righteousness He loved, He deliberately turned His back upon equality with God and became a man and submitted Himself to the lowest disgrace and the most awful suffering a man can endure. Who can fathom such holiness as that?

Again in Galatians 3:13 we read: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." A wonderful statement of the same great truth is found in the Old Testament in Isaiah's prophetic vision of the coming Christ: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Here was the crowning manifestation of the holiness of our Christ as He really was. He so hated sin and so loved righteousness that He was not only willing to die rather than sin Himself, but He was willing even to give up His Divine glory, and be made in the fashion of a man, willing to die the death of a malefactor, be rejected of man and separated from God, that others might not sin. He was willing to make any sacrifice to do away with sin.

Men look at the cross of Christ and say, "See the love of God and the love of Christ." Yes, they are wonderfully set forth there; but look again at the cross of Jesus and see the holiness of Christ as seen in His atoning death. He so hated sin and so loved righteousness as to make that matchless, marvelous, unfathomable sacrifice of the Throne of God for the cross of shame in order to save men and women from the sin He hated to the righteousness He loved.

In the seventh place, the holiness of Jesus Christ will in the future manifest itself in the awful, irrevocable punishment of those who refuse to be separated from their sin. That comes out again and again in the Scriptures. For example, we read those appalling words of our Lord Himself in Matthew 25:31-32, 41: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Again we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (translation).

Why must men who will not forsake sin and receive the Saviour perish forever? Because the real Christ is holy. He died to save men whom He loves from sin which He hates. He stopped at no sacrifice to accomplish that. Language fails to describe the sacrifice He made. But, if men themselves refuse to be thus separated from their sins, He leaves them to their self-chosen partnership and the doom which it involves.

Men talk much of the holiness of God and the love of Jesus, but the real Jesus is just as holy as God, and God is just as loving as Jesus. In this and in all else Jesus and the Father are one.

Let us remember, then, in trying to picture to ourselves the real Christ, that, first of all, the real Christ is holy. Until we have an adequate conception of His holiness, we can have no adequate conception of His love.

To sum it all up— "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Re: Beholding The True Christ by R.A. Torrey - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2009/9/1 10:16

Oh, that we might see HIM as He truly is and be found in HIM, blameless and righteous!!