

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

GENESIS 1:1-2:3

When we seek to understand an idea, it is good to start at the beginning. This is especially true of holiness. The creation account at the beginning of the Bible tells us a few things about the holiness of God. The word for holiness in biblical Hebrew is קדוש (*qadash*), and it means “to set apart” or “to be set apart.” God himself is set apart from all of creation because he is the creator of all things. The opening words of Genesis, “In the beginning, God,” show us that God himself is holy because he exists before anything is created. Throughout the Old Testament, the people of Israel speak about how God is holy and no one else is like God (see 1 Samuel 2:2). God’s holiness is rooted in the fact that no one else exists outside of creation. By his very nature, God is set apart from all of creation and therefore is the only one who can truly claim to be holy.

Anything else that is holy derives its holiness from God’s holiness. We find this in the creation account when God declares the seventh day to be *qadash*, or holy. The sabbath day is declared holy not because there is something intrinsically holy about that day, but because of what God did on that day: he rested. Throughout the biblical witness, objects are holy because of their connection to God. When a person is set apart for God’s purposes, he or she is said to be holy to God. Notice, though, that a person is made holy by God and not of his or her own accord. God, the only truly holy being, is the only one who can make someone or something holy. By being set apart from creation, only God can set apart other things for his purposes in creation.

This is important for us as a holiness people. We are called to be holy, but we are made holy only through God declaring us holy. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves holy, yet we are called to live out the set-apartness which God has bestowed upon us (see 2 Timothy 1:9). This understanding of God’s holiness should also help us realize how great God’s love is for us and praise him in gratitude for all that he has done for us.