

BSL: Holy

BIBLE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

קדש - Qadash (kā·dash')

Qadash is a Hebrew root in verb form that translates into a series of religious and ceremonial terms in our English Bibles: Holy, Consecrated, Sanctified, and Saints.

In the Hebrew text, particularly the Pentateuch, the Qadash refers most often to either (1) God and God's character, (2) items dedicated to the worship of God such as the Tabernacle and its furnishings, and (3) the priests who were "consecrated" (of the same root verb) to the Lord. The Greek counterpart Hagios (see parallel text 1 Peter 1:16) is used in the New Testament to describe the standard for Christian conduct as well as the identity of believers: translated "saints" which literally means "holy ones."

Disambiguation:

The concept of being holy, behaving holy, or doing holy deeds is often used in Christian teaching to describe good deeds that would be more accurately defined as righteous acts, not holy acts. The Hebrew terms "Tsadaq" is the more appropriate term that means to be in good legal standing before God. Tsadaq is a key concept in justification--being made righteous before God by the imputed righteousness of Christ--whereas Qadash is a key concept in sanctification, which is interdependent with justification yet a distinctly separate divine act.

Key uses of the word in understanding its meaning:

Exodus 19:4-6 - God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt foreshadowed the salvation through Christ that He would bring 1500 years later. He tells Israel in Exodus 19:4, "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt." In view of this great salvation that God gave to Israel, He expects obedience in return. "If you obey me fully and keep my covenant... you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6). Holiness, therefore, was shown in the Old Covenant to be:

1. The response to, not the result of nor the reason for, salvation.
2. A conditional covenant requiring action on the part of man and proven to be unachievable.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 - Paul writes in his letter to Thessalonica a prayer for them. He asks that God would sanctify (literally to make holy or set apart to God) them "through and through" and continues praying that their "whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless." These are lofty requests of God and ones that we must confess in our human weakness that we cannot achieve ourselves. He then concludes with a word of encouragement that God "is faithful and He will do it." Here it is clearest in scripture that the complete sanctification (status of holiness) we await is:

1. To be revealed "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," in contrast to the notion that we are entirely sanctified in this life.
2. Accomplished entirely of God, as the scripture reads, "he will do it."

1 Corinthians 1:2 - Paul opens his letter to the church in Corinth whom he identifies as both "sanctified [made holy] in Christ Jesus and called to be holy." The intersection of human responsibility and divine authority is mysterious. However, one thing that can be stated for certain from this verse and others is that God's faithfulness to sanctify us as believers (i.e. 1 Thess 5:24) cannot be construed to replace nor diminish our own call to be holy.

Key Concept: As believers, God mercifully chooses to make us holy by His will and doing, and yet we are simultaneously called to act out that holiness in our own lives (1 Peter 2:15).