

J.J.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Isaiah 6 : 1 – 8

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*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

*4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.
5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”*

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

*8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

INTRODUCTION :

Name 5 things that would describe yourself as a Christian? (Give them time) I wouldn't ask any of you to enumerate on how you describe yourself as a Christian. But if I am a betting man, most of you wouldn't have described yourself as holy. The question is... Why not?

The Holiness of God. It's not preached much in churches as a topic. Pastors love preaching about love, faith and others. It's a popular topic. But, why is it a tremendous challenge to preach on the holiness of God. Why?

HOLINESS IS THE VERY ESSENCE OF GOD!

Quote: Holiness in angels and saints is but a quality, but in God it is His essence. – Thomas Brooks (Puritan preacher and author in the 1600s)

TRIHAGION : When the heavens describes the Lord, they describe him in what you call the TRIHAGION

3 And they were calling to one another:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

You can also see this in Revelation 4 as John saw our Lord seated on His throne.

Revelation 4: 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

*“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”*

R.C. Sproul was correct to point out :

Quote: Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. Not that He is merely holy, or even holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy. The Bible never says that God is love, love, love; or mercy, mercy, mercy; or wrath, wrath, wrath; or justice, justice, justice. It does say that he is holy, holy, holy, that the whole earth is full of His glory. - R.C. Sproul

If we look up the word “holy” in the Bible, we will see it was used :

289 times in the Old Testament

229 times in the New Testament. That's more than 500 times.

I say it again. Holiness is the very essence of God.

Yes God is love. But if God is not Holy, Holy, Holy.... Then He is not God.

If we describe God is holy...it's a Holy Love.

Yes God is just. But if God is not Holy, Holy, Holy.... Then He is not God.

Yes God is Almighty. But if God is not Holy, Holy, Holy... then He is not God.

Imagine, an all powerful (Omnipotent), an all knowing (Omniscient) , and all-present (Omnipresent) god but who is NOT HOLY, HOLY, HOLY? We are all doomed!

So today, let's get a glimpse of the Holiness of God by its : Definition, Manifestation and our Reaction

Before we get a glimpse of God's Holiness – we have to understand what it means to be holy.

I. Biblical DEFINITION of Holiness

The reason why I have to say Biblical definition of Holiness is because majority of Christians has an idea of what holiness is all about but it's not exactly quite it.

By God's grace, let me lay it out for you.

- 1. Christians think holiness is moral purity.** Yes. But it's **not** the primary definition of holiness.
- 2. Christians think holiness is white clouds, soft voices, long gowns, droopy eyes and always smiling.**

Story: I remember this story of a monk and he wanted to be “holy” but he wanted to conquer his attraction for women So he decided to become a hermit and lived inside a cliff where he will not be able to see any women. Inside the cleft of the cliff, the only thing he can look at high up the cliff is the sun. For years, he lived there. Food was being brought up through a basket by some of his friends. Finally, after years of staying in the cliff, he decided that he had already conquered his attraction for women. So he finally went down the cliff. As he was walking through the mountain, the first thing he saw was a beautiful woman who smiled at him. You know what happened next? He spent the rest of his life inside the cliff.

Illustration : Who died? Believe it or not, that's what people think holiness is all about. People not smiling and always quiet and etc. that a young boy was brought to the church the first time by his grandmother and the first question that the boy asked, “Grandma, who died?”

That shouldn't be the case. Christians shouldn't be viewed like that – it's not because of "who died?" When people go to church, it shouldn't look like a funeral. They should feel that our Lord rose again from dead.

So you might ask, Pastor, what is holiness? – we'll go back to the original language both in Hebrew and Greek and look at the context on how God Himself is introducing into the world what "holiness" means.

It's important we define it first, before we get a glimpse of it and understand the reaction of Isaiah.

Etymology:

Hebrew ; kaw-doshe' – adjective; ka-dash – verb

Greek : hag-ee-os - consecrated

Both of them has the meaning of something or someone who is set apart, separated from the common. Some theologians call it "apartness" or "otherness" or "distinctiveness" I call it "separated up"

Old Testament : God demonstrated that in the Old Testament when He had to instruct His people what is Holy or not (separated from the common)... *He was telling them that you are mine...I have set you apart from other nations...*

Illustration: Right from the very start, in the first 4 commandments concerning our relationship with Him...God is establishing that I am separate from anything....I am holy....I am like no other....

Exodus 20: 3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

4 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below....

In short, I am so apart from anything that you can't even describe me in words or in painting or in an image.

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Just my very name in itself is so separate. Even the Jews cannot even say it or write the entire word Yahweh.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

(How do they keep it holy?) BY SEPARATING IT FROM OTHER SIX DAYS.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.

In the Old Testament, that is what God is doing. He was letting people know through all the ceremonies, rituals...that there are things that are set apart, separated for me from that of this world....

This is the reason why in the New Testament, CHRISTIANS ARE DESCRIBED AS SAINTS – same Greek word as hagios which means holy. It's because it is GOD HIMSELF WHO SEPARATED US FROM THE WORLD!!!

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (agios) together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours (ESV) To think in this letter, Paul was rebuking the Corinthian church for its divisiveness and carnality.

Ephesians 1: 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy (set apart up for Him) and blameless in his sight.

By His grace, God in His Sovereignty has chosen you and me to be SET APART for Himself.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

VERY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THIS : YOU ARE CALLED SAINT OR HOLY, NOT BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU DO BUT BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST JESUS!!!

This is the reason if you have fully trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, one of the things we can describe ourselves is that we are "holy" It means, we are separated by GOD FOR HIMSELF. WOW!!!!

You are a saint!!! Call the person beside you.. "Saint..."

This is the reason why I say this : We act holy not in order to be holy BUT because God has already called us holy so that's why we need to act holy – separated from the world.

NOW, that we know that "Holy" means "separateness" "set apart"... Now we now understand why the seraphims were declaring :

*3 And they were calling to one another:
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

Remember, Holy is "separated up" He is not only separate from us...or above us... He is ABOVE, ABOVE, ABOVE...OR SEPARATE, SEPARATE, SEPARATE FROM US...OR SUPER DISTINCT, SUPER DISTINCT, SUPER DISTINCT FROM US.

How?

HE IS THE CREATOR. WE ARE THE CREATED.

HE IS PURE. WE ARE IMPURE.

HE IS INFINITE. WE ARE FINITE.

HE IS OMNIPOTENT (ALMIGHTY). WE ARE LIMITED.

HE IS OMNISCIENT. OUR KNOWLEDGE IS LIMITED.

HE IS OMNIPRESENT. WE ARE WHERE WE ARE AND CAN'T

HE IS PERFECT IN LOVE, IN JUSTICE. WE ARE IMPERFECT IN OUR LOVING AND ETC.

IN SHORT...HIS HOLINESS ENCOMPASSES ALL HIS OTHER ATTRIBUTES! WITHOUT HIM BEING HOLY, HOLY, HOLY... HE WON'T BE GOD!

That's why the first verse in Isaiah 6

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

SIGNIFICANCE : This is significant because King Uzziah was a relatively good king who reigned for 52 years. They had prosperity and peace. Now that Israel's king died, the people of Israel were worried on what's going to happen and what the Lord is saying to Isaiah by showing Himself like this... *high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.*

DON'T WORRY, I AM STILL IN CONTROL...I AM STILL SEATED ON MY THRONE...I AM STILL IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING!!!

Application : And it's the same with us. Whatever is happening right now in your life. You think everything might be going down... a sickness...relationship... financial breakdown.... OUR LORD IS HIGH AND LIFTED UP...SEATED ON HIS THRONE... OUR ALL POWERFUL GOD WHO IS HOLY HOLY HOLY....IS TOTALLY IN CONTROL OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE! YOU CAN TRUST HIM!

II. GOD'S MANIFESTATION OF HIS HOLINESS (THIS IS THE GLIMPSE PART)

The reason why I used the word "manifestation" of His holiness is because again **we won't be able to describe even what God looks like on His throne.** He is HOLY, HOLY, HOLY... so majestic, fearful and wondrous at the same time... **that we won't be able to handle it.**

That's why God said to Moses :

Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

BUT HOW CAN WE HAVE AN IDEA OF HIS BEING HOLY, HOLY, HOLY? TRIHAGION

First look at how the Seraphim described Him.

3 And they were calling to one another:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

Illustration: I was in the Philippines and I went to El Nido. I swam with the whale sharks. I swam with millions of sardines... IT WAS SO GLORIOUS! IF CREATION IS LIKE THIS... IMAGINE HOW GLORIOUS THE CREATOR HIMSELF!!! IT'S INFINITELY A MILLION TIMES MORE...

Some of you have been to Banff and have seen the mountains....THAT'S JUST A FINGER PRINT OF GOD'S GLORY!!! IMAGINE GOD HIMSELF!!!

And note : you take a picture of it...and you say to people. The picture doesn't do justice...it's different when you actually see it.

IT'S THE SAME WITH GOD! Creation can only give us an idea but it's different when we are actually in front of OUR CREATOR!!!

That's why Romans 1:20 says

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

*Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

APPLICATION: That's why if you understand that the world is a fingerprint of God's glory and a glimpse of His Holiness..we will be so excited to meet Him one of these days.

If we are already enjoying the beauty and wonders here on earth...IMAGINE THE BEAUTY AND WONDER OF GOD...

That's why Paul said :

1 Corinthians 2:9 However, as it is written:

*"What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived"—
the things God has prepared for those who love him*

Aren't you excited to be with Jesus one of these days?

But of course, God being Holy, Holy, Holy is NOT ONLY in His beauty but also in His power...and that's the reason the reaction is fear.

A GLIMPSE OF HIS HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, POWER IS MANIFESTED THROUGH THE HEAVENLY CREATURES THAT SERVE HIM.

2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Etymology: Seraphim – plural for saraph – means burning...

These are burning creatures with six wings... huge creatures!!! That their voices shook the doorposts and thresholds of the temple. We don't even know if they look like humans...they're just described as "burning"

Side note : Some theologians, see this as an application that when a creature is in front of God, they are so passionate that they are literally on fire...or burning.

That's why when the resurrected Lord was walking with Jesus, they said this to one another :

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

And that's the reason when we worship, when we truly hear God's Word – our hearts are burning.

NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT ANGELS – THESE ARE CREATURES CREATED BY GOD.

We only think about angels as cute cherubims or these beautiful creatures. Do you know that most of the reaction of the people who see angels, their first reaction is not “oh, they’re beautiful... oh..they’re so cute... but IT’S FEAR!!!”

The seraphims are in themselves... HUGE CREATURES THAT ARE BURNING WITH FIRE!!! BUT NOT BEING CONSUMED.

I will show a video of a graphic rendition of what angels look like in Ezekiel 1:16-18; 10:14-22; Revelation 4:8 and then I’ll ask you a question afterwards :

(Show video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxrNA1c8Zpk>

Now showing you these photos :

Imagine, the roof is taken out of these building and then you see right in front of you are those angels?

What is going to be your reaction?

IF THOSE ANGELS SERVING HIM WERE CREATED BY GOD... HOW MUCH MORE DREADFUL GOD IS...

That’s why the Bible says :

Hebrews 10:31 Amplified Bible (AMP)

It is a fearful and terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God [incurring His judgment and wrath].

Look even the seraphims know they are not even worthy to be in the presence of God!!!

With two wings they covered their faces - this means these are already powerful creatures and yet they are not worthy to even look at God.

with two they covered their feet, - this means they are already pure angels but in front of God, they are still unworthy.

and with two they were flying -this means ready to obey.

That’s why if the beings that serve Him on His throne is powerful and majestic AND THEY DEEM THEMSELVES UNWORTHY TO EVEN LOOK AT GOD AND READY TO OBEY HIM....IMAGINE HOW POWERFUL AND MAJESTIC THE GOD THEY ARE WORSHIPPING! THAT’S WHY THEY CRY OUT.

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;

Which is how He is described by John also in Revelation

NOW, that we took a glimpse of the beauty, wonder, power and majesty of God...what's the natural reaction of a person who knows who God really is.

III. THE NATURAL REACTION TO GOD’S HOLINESS

Do you know how I know a person is getting to know God more and more? He becomes aware of his “own” sinfulness!!!

MIRROR Illustration: When I look at the mirror and then the light is bright and harsh, that’s the time every scar and pimple. That’s also when I notice that my hair thinning on top. I see all the blemishes.

Even Paul, the more he grew in his ministry , the more he saw his own sinfulness.

1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.

NOW IMAGINE ISAIAH SEEING THIS...That's what happens when we see who God really is.

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Etymology : “oy”...woe...passionate cry of despair
damah – undone...cut off—to be destroyed.

Why? He realizes what a dreadful sinner he is and the world is full of sin AND THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN SAVE OURSELVES OR RUN AWAY IN FRONT OF HIM!

Story: There was this man he was walking into the marketplace and he saw “Death”. And so he ran away from death. Rode the train and went as far as possible. When he got off the train, he was surprised to see “Death” in front of him again and Death said, “I’m now going to take you.” The man said, “I thought you were going to get me in the marketplace that’s why I ran away from you and rode this train to be far away from you as possible.” Then Death replied, “I too was surprised that I saw you in the marketplace because I was supposed to meet you here and take you.”

The reason why I told this story. There’s no way we can escape from God. We all deserve death because of our sin.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Knowing that we cannot do anything to escape from God’s wrath and judgement. God has to be the one to save us, TO CLEANSE US.

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

NOW here is the thing that amazes me more. Listen carefully.

REMEMBER THIS GOD WHO IS HOLY, HOLY, HOLY... which means HE IS TOTALLY ABOVE US...APART FROM US... NOTHING COMPARED TO US...PERFECT, PURE LOVE AND JUST BUT DREADFUL AND POWERFUL... SEPARATED FROM US... AND WE SINNED AGAINST THIS HOLY, PURE, PERFECT AND POWERFUL GOD AND WE DESERVE HELL FOR THAT....YES WE DESERVE HELL.. BECAUSE HOW DARE WE SIN AGAINST A THRICE HOLY AND POWERFUL GOD AND ETERNAL GOD.... BUT YET HE IS NOT ONLY PURE AND HOLY BUT ALSO FULL OF LOVE...WHAT HAPPENED.

THIS GOD WHO IS APART AND ABOVE US, SEPARATE FROM US.... CAME TO BECOME LIKE US TO BE WITH US...AND DIE FOR US....SO THAT WE CAN BE WITH HIM FOR ETERNITY.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And His name is Jesus, OUR LORD AND OUR GOD!!!

This is the reason why we will never truly appreciate GOD'S LOVE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THAT HE IS A HOLY, HOLY, HOLY GOD!

Again, imagine a very powerful being... no one that we can picture or imagine and TOTALLY SEPARATE FROM US...AND WE SINNED AGAINST HIM AND YET IN HIS LOVE... DOES NOT WANT TO BE SEPARATED FROM US...IN FACT, EVEN BECAME LIKE US....

And what is the proper reaction to God's holiness and love for us.

*8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

In short, if we only truly realize who is calling us OR WHOM WE ARE SERVING... ... THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY GOD WE SINNED AGAINST AND YET BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE US SENT HIS OWN SON JESUS CHRIST TO DIE ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SIN... THE ONLY PROPER REACTION TO THAT IS TO SERVE HIM.

We serve Him. We share the Gospel to others because of this very reason.

The proper attitude of a servant of God if he has seen both God's holiness and great love :
"Lord, I am not worthy but I am willing."

NOW LET ME END WITH THIS STORY :

There was this newspaper who printed that the President of the United States was going to church that Sunday at Riverview Bible Church. Little do people know that the newspaper made a mistake. The President was going to Riverside Bible Church which was a big church in another part of the city. So that Sunday, the pastor of Riverview Bible Church which was a small church was surprised that there were many people in the congregation. All of them were waiting to see the president. The pastor didn't know what was happening, but he then started the worship service. One of the people in the congregation shouted, "Pastor, shouldn't we wait for the president before we start." The pastor replied, "I don't know what you're talking about but the Great God of the Universe who is Holy, Holy, Holy is here with us to receive our worship and that's why we will start the service."

Brothers and sisters, this is one of the reasons we go to church to worship AND to serve Him because OUR HOLY, HOLY, HOLY GOD WHO OUT OF HIS GREAT LOVE SENT HIS OWN SON TO DIE ON THE CROSS TO PAY FOR OUR SINS IS HERE WITH US AND WE SHOULD ALL BOW DOWN IN WORSHIP.

Pray.

S.G.D.