

GOD IS: HOLY HOLY HOLY

In Isaiah 6, King Uzziah has died. In his pride he had corrupted the temple. He contracted leprosy and spent the rest of his life cut off from the temple. His sin separated him from God. In this national calamity, Isaiah seeks God in the temple, and is given a powerful vision of what it means that God is "holy."

1- God is holy in His MAJESTIC EXALTATION. God dwells in unequalled existence, in pure holiness, apart from sin. The LORD sits on *"the throne of heaven, high and lifted up, and His train filled the whole temple,"* accenting the majesty of His position, power, and appearance. Heavenly creatures reflect His glory as they call out, *"Holy holy holy is the LORD of hosts."* This trifold repetition is the strongest form of superlative emphasis, intensifying the meaning of holy. In Revelation 4 the heavenly creatures never cease to say *"holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come."* The sovereign one is majestic in holiness (Exodus 15:11), in the splendor of holiness (Psalm 29:2) set apart and ruling over all. His unspeakable name reminds that He alone is unable to be equaled or exaggerated.

2- God is holy in His MORAL PERFECTION. His ultimate righteousness is without sin. Holiness is the attribute of attributes, says theologian JI Packer. "Holy" signifies everything about God that sets Him apart from us and makes Him God, the singular object of awe and adoration. It covers every aspect of His transcendent greatness and moral perfection, pointing to the Godness of God in all aspects of His being. We don't worship God as "power, power, power" or "love, love, love" but as "holy, holy, holy." This tri-superlative qualifies every attribute of God. Without holiness, His sovereignty and unlimited knowledge and power could become tyranny. Without holiness, boundless love could abandon justice. But God is perfectly holy, with absolute moral perfection defining His very being. As holy, God is perfectly pure. He cannot even look upon wrong (Habakkuk 1:13). Evil may not dwell where God is (Psalm 5:4). He is perfectly pure in his total ethical excellence, without hint or taint of sin. His words and decrees are holy, so that everything God says and does is described by His pure holiness. So is there any hope for us?

3- God is holy in His MAGNIFICATION IN HIS SAINTS. "You shall be holy, for I am holy," declares God in Leviticus 11:44, echoed in 1 Peter 1:16. This truth struck Isaiah in the temple. *"Woe is me, I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."* The closer you get to God's holiness, the more aware you are of sinfulness in yourself and others, as great offense to God. Do you have a dirty mouth? Taking the name of God in vain? Casually inserting God into your expletives? Hypocritically praying "hallowed be Thy name"? How then can you become holy, as God commands?

The seraphim touched Isaiah's lips with the burning coals, saying *"your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for."* You cannot save yourself; only a holy God can take away your sin. This defined the message of Isaiah, as Christ the suffering servant of God, Himself the holy sacrifice, makes atonement for sins. Isaiah repented of his sin, received God's forgiving grace, and was recruited to proclaim the good news, as he declares, *"Here am I, send me."* He experienced the transformation of Isaiah 57:15-18, *"thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy...I have seen his ways but I will heal him, creating the fruit of the lips."* The good news of the gospel is "Jesus saves!"

The holy holy holy triune God is architect of salvation: arranged by the Holy Father (John 17:11), accomplished by the Holy Son (Acts 3:14), applied by the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4). The saved are redeemed by Jesus Christ, *the holy one of God, our holy high priest* (Hebrews 7:26) who offered Himself to atone for sin. So that all who come into union with Christ through repentance and faith *"have put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and are renewed in the spirit of your minds, to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness"* (Ephesians 4:22). Because God has called us to a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9, 1 Peter 2:9).

Revelation 21 reveals eternity to come in *"the holy city, where nothing unclean will ever enter, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."* Those who are made holy by *"the holy one of God,"* to share His holiness (Hebrews 12:10), the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Hebrews 12:23) by Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Like the seraphim, the closer you get to God, the more on fire you will be. Holiness is God's mark in His saints. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you *"offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God"* (Romans 12:1). This is true of all who put all their trust in Jesus only, and proclaim "the holy holy holy One will make YOU holy too!"