

The Holiness of God 9-10-00  
Isaiah 6:1-5

<sup>11</sup> "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? Ex 15:11 (NIV)

Indeed - who is like the LORD? Here in Hebrew the word 'holiness' is used as in the sense of separateness, sacredness, apartness. God is the only One that is Holy in this sense. <sup>4</sup> Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. Rev 15:4 (NIV) <sup>2</sup> "There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. <sup>1</sup> Sam 2:2 NIV

He is Sovereign Creator. Before anything was created there was the Holy One. All things created came into being at the utterance of his voice. He spoke and they were. From eternity He has remained unchanged, needing nothing, self-sustaining, dependent on none. All his creation is dependent on Him. He is alone is ascient, self-existent. We are dependent on Him for everything, space, substance, life itself, but He needs nothing. He never has. He never will. Who is like the LORD?

He has no beginning and no boundaries or limitations except that of his own perfect attributes. Every encounter with God in Scripture, God in His glory, causes the one who sees the revelation to fear and tremble. Moses asked for the encounter and got more than he bargained for. He asked to see God with his own eyes. God, in His mercy, put him in the cleft of a rock and covered him, but allowed him to catch a glimpse of His backside. He said, "You cannot see my face for no man can see my face (a full complete revealing of the glory of God) and live." And the result of that glimpse was a face that so glowed that people ask that it be covered.

Habakkuk heard the Lord in the third chapter of his book and here is how he described his reaction: <sup>16</sup> I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Habakkuk 3:16 (NIV)

Job demanded to meet with God and when he did, Job said he would put his hand over his mouth. *"I deplore myself and repent in dust and ashes."*

In the New Testament Paul saw the Lord, the brilliance of Jesus in his glory and was knocked to the ground and blinded by it. "Who are you Lord?" he asked. John describes the risen glorified Savior in the Revelation, fell to his face and needed to be strengthened just to stand in His presence. What did they see that dropped them to their face in the dirt, and caused them to loathe themselves? And you? Have you ever had an experience of the presence of God, an encounter so real and powerful you can never forget it or what took place? For many it was their salvation experience. For some it was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or accepting the Lordship of Christ, presenting themselves a living sacrifice. Even though your eyes did not behold the glory you knew He was there, the Holy One. Like Paul, then named Saul, you can only call him Lord, Master over all.

Up to this point we have marveled at the wonder of individual attributes. I would be inclined to exalt love, but I would not be true to Scripture. If there is an exalted attribute above the others we have come to it now, holy is our God.

The Scriptures refer to God as Almighty but more frequently He is described as holy. In Hebrew a repetition signified the importance of a thing. It is a verbal and written device used to make us tune in more attentively and add emphasis. Jesus used it when He would say, "Verily, \_\_\_\_\_." Paul wrote in a letter about false teachers that even if they appeared as an angel of light that if they taught another gospel they should be accursed. Then he says, "Again I say unto you", and repeats exactly what he said before on expensive parchment. But when we read of the praise around the throne of God in the Old and New Testaments the angels are not crying, "holy" or "holy, holy" but "holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts!"

These seraphs created to be in the presence of God in all his glory are continually overwhelmed again and again with his holiness. They do not cry love, love, love or merciful, merciful, merciful, or even powerful, powerful, powerful. For the beauty of all those attributes is what is overwhelming them and so they spontaneously cry from the depths of their beings these descriptive words, "Holy, holy, holy!"

Those three pair of wings, a design of their Creator, give them one to shield their faces from the full brilliant splendor of His holiness. As they peak through those feathers designed to dim the brilliance they are overwhelmed again. These are no robots, no unfeeling beings, they are so enthralled they can do nothing else. Can you see them in your mind as they fly around the throne and peering a glimpse like Moses took they are overwhelmed with the holiness of God. From the depths of their being through vocal chords designed to voice praise to God they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3 (NIV) <sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. Isaiah 6:4 (NIV) One day you will witness this with your own eyes and you'll be singing Revelation 4:11.

"...as His power is the strength of them, (his attributes) so His holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them... As sincerity is the luster of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendor of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is holy justice, His wisdom a holy wisdom, His arm of power a "holy arm" (Ps 98:1), His truth or promise a "holy promise" (Ps 105:42). His name, which signifies all His attributes in conjunction, "is holy," Ps 103:1 Stephen Charnock

Holiness is the beauty or splendor of all his attributes, and thus we worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Ps 110:3 "Power is God's hand or arm, omniscience His eye, mercy his bowels, eternity His duration, but holiness is His beauty." SC 2 Chron 20:21 God appointed singers in Israel "that they should praise the beauty of his holiness."

As Isaiah beholds this awesome beautiful sight, he is conscious of how filthy – how out of place – deserving of righteous justice his condition is. In chapter 5 as the Seer of God he is pronouncing woes on the people of Israel. Woe is the opposite of blessing, a declaration of wrath to be poured out in justice. But in chapter 6 the holiness of God causes him to pronounce woe against himself.

We are so used to comparing ourselves with other men or women we get to thinking we are not so bad, but if we had a revelation of the standard, the holiness of God, we would be pronouncing doom on ourselves. We would understand what James was saying when he said grieve, mourn, and wail. Isaiah says, "I am ruined." The word literally means unraveled. He felt like a rug all unwoven with threads in heap on the ground. "I thought I had it all together, but when I see God in His holiness, I am a mess." I see the vile things that have come from my heart and over my lips. Isaiah saw that his false standard, the people around him, had mouths as vile as his own did. This filthiness, he recognizes as himself, has seen the holiness of God. He will never compare himself with man again. He has a new standard. He will never walk in pride again. He has seen how lowly he really is.

Man could have never dreamed of a holy God without revelation. A holy God is the last thing man would ever desire to see. It is that holiness, that otherness, that causes us to fear. In the light of such purity we cry with Isaiah, "Woe is me! I am undone." The revelation of such purity causes us to see how impure we are. In the light of that absolute purity we see the loathing of sin. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Hab 1:13

The fact that there is such purity condemns all impurity. The Word declares God hates all workers of iniquity. (Ps 5:5) Like a mother hates the disease that ravishes the child she loves, our Father God hates sin. His holy purity is all that should be. Everything else is vile, out of place with all creation that this pure God created in a state of goodness. Evil is the destructive disease of creation that was created in holiness, wholeness, purity. What is this black speck of evil rebellion before all this brilliant holy goodness? It is my sin. And what will holy justice do with such evil rebellion toward His glorious goodness? Judge it righteously! He will give me what I deserve, unless I flee to the One who took that judgement in my place. As Moses hid in the cleft of the rock so we hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as the glory of God passes by.

How can such a God demand that I be holy? Over and over again in the Law God said we are to be holy because He is holy! Peter repeats it in the New Testament. That is Purity saying, "Away with all impurity! It does not belong in My creation! It should not be in My presence." But instead of obliterating you to nothing He demands that you be transformed. Now if God asks us something, He makes a way for us to do as He commands. Jesus is the way. He told us that in the Law when He declared He is the One who makes us holy. (Lev 20:8, 21:15,23) You see the Law gave this impossible command to be holy. It declared that only God could make us holy. And then in the fullness of time the reality of those shadows and types --God in the flesh -- Jesus Christ shed his blood so you could be holy in Him. Without the shedding of blood sin could not be forgiven. Rebellion demands death from a holy God. But the blood shed was not ours but His. By that blood the blackness is removed and we are white as snow. When we stand in that pure Presence of the Holy One we are as He created us to be. We are good, not because of what we did, but what He did in our place. His holiness is satisfied. Rebellion is gone. All is pure and in unity. Praise his **holy** name!