



Tim Pauley
PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358
304.767.8430
tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

"I Saw the Lord..." (Isaiah 6)

Study 5
Holy! Holy! Holy!
(Is. 6:1-4)

Visitors are always impressed by the beauty and grandeur of our capitol building. It is set aside for a special purpose and its grand design demonstrates that purpose. The Senate, House, and Supreme Court chambers are all devoted for specific functions. Our statehouse is certainly grand and by design it is completely unique from any other building in the state. Our study this week is on the Holiness of God. Considering how our capitol building is set apart, grand, and unique may help us in a small way better understand God's holiness.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."¹

This is how A.W. Tozer begins his classic book on the attributes of God. He believed if you could get from any person an honest answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about God?" then you could determine with certainty their spiritual future and condition. So, let us ask ourselves the all-important question, "What do I think about God?". If we asked Isaiah this question after his vision recorded for us in Isaiah 6, I believe his instant answer would be, "**GOD IS HOLY!**" Let us again look at his vision and see what we might learn about our Holy God.

¹In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of Hosts...

In his vision, Isaiah sees angelic beings calling out to each other praises to God - "Holy, Holy, Holy..." In Hebrew writing and poetry, emphasis was often added by repetition. The emphasis is on God's holiness. No other attribute of God is given this emphasis. We never hear "God is love, love, love" or "God is just, just, just". Here we have repeated, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts.

Holy is the word most often used to describe God. It is a difficult word to define, and we find many attempts by preachers and authors. "The incomparable, unrivaled excellence of God". "The sum of all moral excellency". "The glorious perfection belonging to the nature of God". It is

impossible to sum up the idea in simple sentence or two. There are several dimensions to a proper understanding of holiness.

To be holy is to be distinct, separate, in a class by one's self. Look at these three texts. 1 Samuel 2:2, "**There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.** Isaiah 40:25, "**To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?" says the Holy One.** Hosea 11:9, "**For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst...**" The simplest meaning of holy is "separate" or "set apart". God is infinitely separate from us, above us, and beyond us.

To be holy is to be sinless and morally pure. This is perhaps our most common idea of holiness. God is infinitely pure, good, and righteous. Sin is any violation of His character or His law.

To be holy relates to every aspect of God's character. If you read a book on the attributes or characteristics of God, "holiness" is usually considered as separate, distinct quality. However, "Holy" refers to His very essence or nature and relates to **all** His qualities. His love is Holy love. His justice is Holy justice. His power is Holy power. Holiness is used as a synonym for His deity and calls attention to everything God is.

The Whole Earth is Full of His Glory

Holiness refers to the inner, intrinsic qualities of God. Glory refers to the outward expression of those qualities. Isaiah saw God's glory expressed in the throne, the robes, the angels praising, the foundations shaking, and the temple filling with smoke. We see God's glory in His creation. We see God's glory revealed in His Word.

The Importance of God's Holiness

Throughout the Bible we see demonstrated how important is to know, acknowledge, and reverence God's holiness. Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu were struck

dead when they offered “strange fire” at the altar (Lev. 10). Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he violated God’s holiness by disobeying Him (Numbers 20; 27). Uzzah was instantly killed when he violated God’s holiness by reach out to touch the Ark of the Covenant. In the New Testament Ananias and Sapphira were killed when they lied to the church and to God about their offerings (Acts 5). We look at these events and think them harsh and severe. But they clearly demonstrate to us the important of recognizing and reverencing God’s holiness.

What God’s Holiness Means to Us

We see from Isaiah’s vision and his response what an understanding of God’s holiness meant to him and what it should mean to us. When Isaiah glimpsed God’s holiness, he realized how unholy and sinful he was. Isaiah, along with the angels worshipped God. Isaiah surrendered to God in obedience and service. (We will look more closely at Isaiah’s response in our future studies).

God gives us an even greater and challenging response to His holiness. In Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; and 20:7 God challenged the people of Israel,

“...Be holy, for I am holy.”

In the New Testament, Peter challenges believers,

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:14-16

Jesus puts it into even more challenging terms, “**You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect**” (Matthew 5:48).

When we begin to understand God’s holiness, His perfect sinlessness and moral purity; how completely separate, above and beyond us He is, we have to wonder how we can be holy as He is holy. Again, we look at the alter where the sacrifice was made. This points us to the cross where Christ, the perfect sacrifice suffered and died. Christ came not only to die but to live a perfect life of holiness and obedience. When we trust Christ, not only are our sins forgiven, but His holiness is credited to us. This is **salvation or justification** – the act by which God makes us right with Him. Here we are made perfect and holy in God’s sight.

As believers, we now constantly strive to live up to that position we have in Christ. We still struggle with sin but God is at work in our lives to change us and help us grow in holiness every day. This is **sanctification**, the process by which God works in our lives to make us more like Christ – more holy in our daily lives. I believe this is what is taking place in Isaiah’s vision. As we get a clearer view of God’s holiness, we get a clearer view of our own sin and what we need to change to be more like Him

Glimpses of Christ’s Holiness

All the Old Testament points us to Christ. We see examples from His life that remind us of Isaiah’s experience with God.

Jesus Calms the Storm – In Mark 4 as the disciples fear for their lives we read how Jesus got up, rebuked the wind, and the sea became perfectly calm. The Bible tells us the disciples “...**Became very much afraid, and said to one another, ‘who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?’**” They got a glimpse of the holiness and glory of Christ and were even more afraid than during the storm.

The Disciples’ Catch of Fish – In Luke 5 We see an account that amazingly parallels Isaiah’s experience. The disciples were washing their nets after fishing all night without catching anything. Jesus tells them to put out to deep water and let out their nets. After protesting, the disciples obey and let out their nets, bringing in an overflowing catch of fish. Peter’s response was amazing: “...**he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, ‘Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!’**” Jesus, as God does to Isaiah, calls them to ministry and the Bible tells us “**they left everything and followed Him**”. (Luke 5:1-11)

Our statehouse is a grand and beautiful building set aside for a special purpose. It is unique from any others buildings in our state. We certainly would not use the word “holy” to describe it as this is reserved for sacred and spiritual things. However, in small way it may help us understand the idea of holiness. God is grand and glorious, set apart from and above us in every way. The question remains, “What do I think about God?” Let our study of Isaiah’s vision raise our thoughts and understanding of God. Let make sure we have the holiness of Christ credited to us through our faith in Him. And let us seek to grow in holiness each day.

Resources

The Knowledge of the Holy. A.W. Tozer

The Attributes of God. Arthur W. Pink

The Holiness of God. R.C. Sproul

¹Tozer, A.W. *The Knowledge of the Holy.* Harper & Row. 1961. Pg 1.

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays

8:00 House Government Org Conference Room (East Wing)

12:00 Noon Treasurer’s Conference Room (EB54)

5:00 PM Senate President’s Conference Room