

**Attributes of God**  
**Holy, Holy, Holy Are You God! - Isaiah 6:1-8**

- I. Introduction.
  - A. A little boy excitedly told his mom that he had just MEASURED HIMSELF and he was six feet tall!
    1. Mom was a little skeptical, so she asked him to measure himself again while she watched.
    2. She discovered the problem - he took out a 6-inch ruler. He figured right - six-ruler-heights tall - he just had the wrong ruler, the wrong standard.
  - B. Of the many things about God that are hard for us to "measure" or define, one of the more difficult is His **holiness**.
    1. Holiness is one of those uncomfortable attributes because it reminds us how much unlike God we are. Let's start with a definition:
    2. *"The holiness of God is His **intrinsic** and **transcendent** purity, the **standard** of righteousness to which the whole universe will be conformed."*
- II. Holy, Holy, Holy Are You God!
  - A. God does **not** conform to any standard created by others. He is the standard. Therefore His creation must conform to **His** standard.
    1. Holiness might be considered centerpiece of God's attributes.
      - a) God's holiness unlocks the door to understanding and making sense out of everything else about Him. It infiltrates all the other attributes.
      - b) His love is **holy** love. His omniscience is **holy** and all-knowing, His omnipresence is **holy** all-presence. Everything about God has been infiltrated by the attribute of God called holiness. So if we want to know God we must gain some understanding of His holiness.
    2. There are two elements to God's holiness.
      - a) Greatness = "set apart". God is totally above and beyond us, in a class by Himself. *"There is a profound difference between Him and us."*
      - b) Purity = God is good. He does what is right and never does what is wrong. God is uncompromising with sin. God does not "bend" when it comes to wrong-doing. He always acts in a righteous manner because His nature is holy.
  - B. The best way to understand God's holiness is to consider the teaching of **Isaiah 6:1-8**.
    1. **First, Isaiah sees a vision of God's holiness that includes His greatness and purity - vv 1-4:** *"In 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. "Seraphim 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. (3) One called out to another & said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." (4) And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out & the temple filled with smoke."*
      - a) The setting = after King Uzziah's death - the end of his unholy influence over the nation.
        - (1) He was a powerful, successful King who brought stability to the nation during part of his 52 year reign - until he tried to do the priest's job!
        - (2) 2 Chron. 26: 17-21 tells the sad story of the king who would be priest as well - only Messiah could do that! For Uzziah, it was an unforgivable and arrogant infringement on God's holiness. Uzziah went from a powerful king to a humble, shunned leper.
        - (3) When K. Uz. died it = time of mourning & transition - & confusion & uncertainty. What to do now? The time = right for Isaiah's vision.
      - b) What did Isaiah see in the vision? He saw the Lord high and lifted up, and at His side were angels like Isaiah had likely never seen.
        - (1) Their job = to give glory to the Lord. They were pure (angelic) yet with their six wings they covered their faces and feet. Why?
        - (2) They shield themselves from the direct gaze of God because of their reverence and awe before the presence of the Lord's holiness!
        - (3) The absolute purity of God's holiness in his vision makes these sinless (pretty holy to us) angels **blush** and **cover**. What should it do to us?
      - c) The continuous occupation of the holy seraphim is the work of praising God's even greater holiness (v. 3).
        - (1) The substance of their songs, repeated over and over, = declaration of the undeniable holiness of God.
        - (2) Three times the word is sung. God is given the "3rd degree" (the highest) proclamation, something the angels will give to **no** other being.
      - d) "God is holy" = He is **completely** separate or distinctive from the unholy or common. The divine Creator is separate from all other things.
        - (1) He is separated from creation not just because of its **sinfulness** but in but because in essence He differs from His creation as well.
        - (2) God is absolutely independent of His creation, outside of it or transient from it (remember His aseity, His preexistence?).
        - (3) Creation is dependent upon Him, He is not dependent upon it.
        - (4) Holy = God is transcendent or beyond any human limits, supreme and absolute in greatness.
        - (5) He is free of space and time in a totally unique dimension, outside of His created universe. Talk about a "cut above!"
      - e) "Holiness" also includes an ethical element, the complete freedom and separation from what is sinful not only in essence, but in character.
        - (1) So God is holy in thought, word, and deed.
        - (2) So first we see greatness and purity in His Holiness.
    2. **Second, Isaiah reacts to God's holiness and contrasts it with his and mankind's sinful unworthiness - v. 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."*
      - a) The doors of the Temple were not the only thing shaking in Isaiah's vision. His body quaked too! His fear was so real as he saw the true holiness of God Isaiah became profoundly aware of both his and his society's lack of holiness and gross sinfulness.
      - b) When he sees the rightful reigning Monarch of the Universe on His throne he bursts out an agonizing cry of truth and despair.
        - (1) Isaiah's response is not what we might expect. He didn't say, "Cooooo!," "Wow!," or "Dude!" He is not just impressed, he is undone!!
        - (2) To be "undone" = to be broken or come apart at the seams. A psychologist might say you're experiencing personal disintegration.
          - (a) The reason he is undone and outside = because he was unclean.
          - (b) When seen next to the purity of God's holiness, the impurity of human sin is overwhelmingly evident. The prophet realizes with sickening force that his personal holiness (or that of the nation of Israel) is not in any way keeping up with God's holiness..
      - c) Biblically, when someone gets a glimpse of God's holiness they're typically terrified! (Lk. 1:12; 2:9; Acts 5:19).
        - (1) Why? God said in **Exodus 33:20**, *"No one may see me and live."* God's holiness is so pure it will destroy anything sinful and unholy.
        - (2) The first response of an unholy person to the holiness of God = acute awareness of personal sin (Mt. 17).

- (3) The second response should bring a realization of the impurity of human sin.
  - (a) It is like we live our lives with most of our lights off so that we try (we think we can) hiding most of our wickedness in the dark.
  - (b) But when we come into God's presence (like Isaiah) the darkness disappears. All that's hidden from others is exposed to Him.
- d) We may feel we're doing pretty well - because we're comparing ourselves to each other!
  - (1) We can always spot those "worse" than we are. So we might feel "safe" behind the walls of self-righteousness we build up. However...
    - (a) ...when we compare ourselves to God's absolute holiness, our delusional "Jericho" walls quickly & completely come tumblin' down!
    - (b) All who believe they are doing the right things - *and yet are apart from God* - have no awareness of how deeply stained they are.
    - (c) We must be undone (as Is. was) before we can be redone. The HS has to "awaken us" to our unholiness before we can receive His grace.
  - (2) Isaiah's eyes saw the Lord and for the first time in his life Isaiah really understood who God's holiness.
    - (a) At the same time, he truly understood who he was - a man of unclean lips (un-holy!)
    - (b) Isaiah now knows sin must be removed - by an act of God - before he and the people of Israel could ever serve God with "clean" lips.

King Frederick II, 18th-century king in Prussia visited a prison. All the inmates crowded around him saying they were innocent (the King could release them), except for a man who sat quietly in the corner with his head bowed. The king asked, 'Why are you here?' "'Armed robbery, majesty.' 'Are you guilty?'" The King asked. 'Yes.' The king turned to the guard & said, 'Set this 'guilty' man free. I don't want him corrupting all these other "innocent" prisoners.'

- 3. **Third, Isaiah sees God's holiness can and does provide for mankind's unholiness - vv 6-8:** "...one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth & said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, & your sin atoned for." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, & who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."
  - a) Once Isaiah realizes/acknowledges his sin, notice what happens in v. 7 - "...He touched my mouth...and said...your sin is forgiven."
    - (1) We might read this and say, "Ouch!" The angel took a hot coal and touched it to Isaiah's lips. Why? He cauterizes (cleanses) the sin.
    - (2) Cauterization = the process of sealing a wound or destroying abnormal or infected tissue with a heated instrument. God cauterizes Isaiah's lips with the hot coal in the vision and eliminates the impurity.
  - b) Isaiah's guilt is taken away but it is not shrugged off. God doesn't say, "let's just forget it!" He tells him his sin "is atoned for," or paid for.
    - (1) How? It was paid for by Jesus nearly 800 years later at the cross. The plan was in place.
    - (2) God forgave Isaiah based on what Christ was going to do. Today, He is willing to forgive you and I on the basis of what He did 2000 years b4.
      - (a) Finding God's pardon in our lives begins by admitting our guilt. To insist we are innocent puts us in a prison of our own making.
      - (b) Yet when we admit our need, our guilt, God, in His holiness, offers us grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.
  - c) When the forgiveness of sin is experienced, loving response to God follows as we see in verse 8. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
    - (1) Now that Isaiah understands the truth of God's holiness, God speaks.
      - (a) Isaiah was not ready to hear the holy God before this moment, as if the possibility of service could not be appreciated until this time. Isaiah is now willing to serve not out of obligation but out of gratitude and out of a desire to exalt God's glory.
      - (b) God makes it plain Isaiah's spiritual experience isn't just a means to an end, nor an end in itself.
      - (c) Isaiah wants the world to know the holiness of God. He's not concerned about promoting his school of prophets or a course on public speaking. Isaiah is concerned with just one thing ... to honor the One who is most worthy of honor - the only Holy God.
  - d) In response to his cleansing Isaiah submitted himself without restriction to God's service.
    - (1) No matter how difficult his task would be, Isaiah said, "Here am I. Send me!" The painful cleansing process was necessary before Isaiah could fulfill the task to which God was calling him.
    - (2) Before we accept God's call to speak for Him to those around us, we must be cleansed as Isaiah was, confessing our sins and submitting to God's control. Letting God purify us may be painful, but we must be purified so that we can be holy represent our pure and holy God.
  - e) The conditions of our pandemic-crippled world are such we might be in despair for the future. What can one person do?
    - (1) Not much alone. But through those who are willing, God can do wonders beyond our wildest imaginations. The Lord is always able and willing.

### III. Conclusions

- A. Isaiah had a vision of holy deity (he saw the Lord), a vision of unholy depravity (he saw himself as he truly was), and a vision of duty (he saw a lost world).
- B. Here are three final observations.
  - 1. **First**, obviously, there is no better way to use our time than to use it for God's glory. There is nothing better. There is no one greater or more worthy than our Lord. He is our life, our hope, our joy. To run after and serve anything other than the Lord is foolishness.
  - 2. **Second**, we need to take personal holiness seriously. Maybe its time to make a personal inventory and to make changes in your entertainment; your use of your time; how you spend your money; how you talk; the way you do your job; how you treat others; how you worship, etc.
  - 3. **Finally**, we need to stop comparing ourselves to others and start measuring ourselves by the correct standard.
    - a) When we measure our lives by God's standards we see ourselves truly - even if it is a bit uncomfortable.
    - b) The amazing thing about the gospel = it tells us because of what Christ has done on our behalf, if we admit our sin and turn to Him for mercy we will find it in His holiness. Our Holy God will cover us the holiness of Christ. God is great and He is holy and deserving of our praise and glory.
- C. When we truly see the holiness of our Holy God, we recognize **our** sinfulness and seek **His** cleansing. Then we will receive the power to do **His** work, even as Isaiah did. Send me! We will say.
- D. Let's pray. *Heavenly Father, you have summoned us to a calling higher than this world, yet, we daily face the darkness within this world. Grant us the eyes to see and the ears to hear the leading of Your Holy Spirit so that we may overcome the darkness around us.*