

# “The Holiness of God”

Isaiah 6:1-7

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**All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted**

What comes to your mind when you think about God? A.W. Tozer once said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” God has perfectly revealed Himself in His Word. Among other descriptors, He is creator (Col. 1), love (1 John 4), faithful and just (Deut. 32), Unchanging (James 1), King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God (1 Tim. 1), holy (Rev. 4). Holiness is the state of being perfect in goodness and righteousness, and is the most fundamental of all of God’s characteristics. A right relationship with God begins with a right understanding of His holiness, and we get a good picture of our response to His holiness in Isaiah 6. God’s holiness demands an appropriate response.

*Holiness inspires Awe.* v.1 – “In the year that King Uzziah died...” Uzziah had been king for 52 years, and as such, was likely the only king most of the people had ever known. Now that a new king was to be in the palace, there would be a sense of uncertainty in the land. But *regardless of who is in positions of authority, God is still in charge.* In Isaiah’s vision, he “...saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.” The Lord is not pacing or fretting; the conditions in the world are not causing God any anxiety. He is exalted, even among the host of heaven, for He is glorious as none other ever have been or ever could be. The extreme length of His robe is indicative of His authority and majesty. He, and He alone, rules the universe.

Secondly, *holiness incites reverence.* Verse 2 says, “Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.” Seraphim (the plural of seraph) means literally “burning one” or “fiery serpent.” These heavenly creatures are not literally standing; the word translated there means what we might think of as being stationed, or ‘in position.’ With 2 wings, they are ready to execute the Lord’s commands; with 2 wings they cover their feet (their unworthiness) and with the other 2 wings, they cover their eyes – even *they* are unworthy to behold the Lord. These creatures have been there since they were created, and they were still in a position of reverence before the Lord. This is very different than the attitude in many churches today. We act as if entering His presence were a chore, not a privilege, and our familiarity with God has robbed us of our reverence for Him.

The *holiness of God ignites worship.* “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (v.3) This is the only time an attribute of God is repeated 3x like this – a method of putting emphasis on this attribute. This song, sung by the seraphim, is what is playing on continuous loop in the throne room of heaven. God chose that song without consulting with anyone, reminding us that worship is always and only about and for God. All of creation reflects the beauty and majesty of God. He was under no obligation to make creation wonderful, but He chose to do so, and in doing so, He has given us insight into His goodness. He has done great things, and on top of all that, He is holy...holy...holy... and that holiness ignites in us a fire of worship that is not to be hindered or contained. Worship Him in fullness and with passion!

Fourth, *the holiness of God instills fear*. Fear is the natural response to the uncertain, unexpected, or uncontrollable. Verse 4 says, “And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.” Now, if you were sitting at home and your house was shaking and filling up with smoke, you’d know something was wrong, wouldn’t you? Indeed, Isaiah recognizes that what’s wrong in his vision is *HIM!* He does not belong there, in the presence of God’s holiness. Even the angels are not entitled to God’s presence – that’s why they cover their eyes and feet. Many churches today have grown so comfortable with God’s presence that they think they are entitled to it. This leads to watering down God’s holiness, in order to make Him seem more attractive to sinners, but this watered-down counterfeit is exponentially less worthy of worship & is infinitely less attractive to sinners.

*God’s holiness induces confession*. Just imagine staring face to face with the Lord of the universe, in the throne room of heaven. What would you say? *It’s easy to think yourself brave until you need to be* – you would probably react just like Isaiah did, crying out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (v.5). In Matthew 12:34, Jesus tells the Pharisees, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” So, Isaiah is saying, “My lips are unclean, because I am unclean! I shouldn’t be here! I’m lost – undone by being in the presence of complete and utter holiness.” The presence of God’s holiness brings an acute awareness of your sin and that everything that comes out of you, which is reflective of everything that is within you, is unclean. Later on, Isaiah [64:6] reminds us that the best of our righteousness is as attractive as filthy rags. You become keenly aware of your unworthiness when you are in the presence of God’s holiness – that drives you to confession.

In response to that confession, *God’s holiness imparts access* to His presence. You can never deserve God’s love and forgiveness – you utterly lack the capability – but God comes to your rescue. In verses 6-7, Isaiah confesses he is a man of unclean lips and in response, one of the seraphim takes a live coal from the altar using tongs and touches Isaiah’s mouth. This is symbolic of the extension of God’s forgiveness. You cannot forgive yourself – that would be like writing yourself a check using your own money; nothing is gained. Trying to ‘earn’ God’s forgiveness is, likewise, of no effect. There is no righteousness gained there! But God is righteous – and more to the point, He is holy. Holiness means being entirely different; wholly set apart; altogether separate; it is not the best of what humanity can be; it means being completely and eternally ‘other.’ God was never a man, and you can never become like God.

There is no word to capture how good/perfect/righteous/faithful/loving God is, other than “holy” – God is not like you. He should utterly annihilate your very existence, and yet, when you confess and repent of your sin, He grants access to His grace. Once Isaiah confessed his unrighteousness, God was faithful to forgive Him, as symbolized by the touching of the live coal to his lips. He was given access to the presence of the King – the presence of the Lord.

What about you? Which side of that confession are you on? If you’ve confessed your sin, asked Jesus Christ to forgive you of those sins and to help you live differently, then it’s okay; you have access to God’s holy presence. If you haven’t, then maybe it’s time you did. God is speaking today, inviting you to respond to His holy presence by admitting your sin and asking Him to forgive you of it. When you do that, He will create a new heart in you and welcome you into His presence. The proper response to God’s holiness is one of awe, reverence, worship, fear, and confession.

Tozer – “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” What comes to your mind when you think about God? Is it a clear picture, based on the Word of God? Holiness is the single most defining of God’s characteristics, and it calls for a response. Are you ready to respond to God today?

## Takeaways from this message.

*“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most IMPORTANT thing about us” (A.W. Tozer)*

Holiness is the most FUNDEMENTAL of God’s characteristics.

- Holiness inspires AWE.
- Holiness incites REVERENCE.
- Holiness ignites WORSHIP.
- Holiness instills FEAR.
- Holiness induces CONFESSION.
- Holiness imparts ACCESS.

## DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning’s message.

1. What is your one big ‘takeaway’ from today’s passage and/or message? How will you apply that in your life?
2. What would you say are God’s most evident, prominent, or ‘important’ qualities? Why?
3. Which is best, (a) the smell of a rose, (b) the colors of the sunset, or (c) the functioning of your wrist?
4. How does God’s sovereignty give you peace in times of political (or other) unrest?
5. In what ways is the image of God we see in Isaiah 6:1-7 similar to or different from the way you usually think of God?
6. Read and respond to Isaiah 6:8. What impresses or surprises you? How does this compare to your own experience when God has given you a commission or assignment?
7. What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?