

**"The Holiness of God"**  
(Isaiah 6:1-7)

Introduction: You all know what it means to be set apart to something. You children, when you were baptized, were set apart from the world by God, and were reserved for His use. You adults as well, when you received baptism, were set apart to Him. You are then holy to the Lord. This is what holiness is: it is being set apart from one thing to be now exclusively for another. Well, the Bible tells us that God is holy as well. That is, He is separate from all His creation and is perfectly and absolutely pure. And what I want you to see in this evening's message is,

***Because God is exalted far above all His creatures in majesty and purity, you need a perfect righteousness in order to dwell with Him.***

**I. *God is Infinitely Exalted Above all His Creation in Majesty and Purity (vv. 1-4).***

**A. *Isaiah's Vision of God's Holiness (vv. 1-4).***

1. Context.

- a. The reign of Uzziah, king of Judah was at an end.
- b. It was the end of a time of great prosperity.
  - (i) From here Judah was to continue its downward spiral.
  - (ii) Assyria, the nation that was to take Israel captive, was on the rise.
  - (iii) This may have even been the same year in which Rome was founded [Young 234-35].
- c. In that year, Isaiah had a vision of God.
- d. He was allowed into God's council-room to inaugurate his calling as prophet.
  - (i) Every prophet set aside to be God's spokesman must enter into the council room of God.
  - (ii) Here he hears the secret counsels of the majestic Lord.
  - (iii) He sees a vision of the holy One of Israel.

2. He sees God's exaltedness (v. 1).

- a. No one can see God for He is a Spirit.
- b. But yet Isaiah sees God in his vision.
  - (i) This vision is an accommodation.
  - (ii) Man is a creature and will always be subject to creaturely limitations.
  - (iii) Throughout eternity God will manifest Himself in such a way that we as creatures may perceive Him.
- c. He sees the high and holy God in the temple.
  - a. We learn from John 12:41 that this is the Son.
  - b. God has always revealed Himself through the person of the Son.

- e. He sees the Lord seated upon His throne.
    - (i) He is sitting as King over the theocracy of Israel.
    - (ii) And He is seated for judgment.
    - (iii) And the long flowing robe pictures the glory of His majesty.
  - f. Isaiah is being called to a ministry in which the sovereign power of God will be displayed and in which judgment is to be prominent [Young 238].
    - (i) To prepare him for this, he receives a vision of God's holiness.
    - (ii) He is the sovereign Lord who can create and destroy and in whose hands are the times of all men and nations.
3. He sees the Seraphim who attend God's court (v. 2).
- a. The word means "burning ones" and it occurs only here.
  - b. They are God's attendants, who stand above His throne to wait upon Him.
  - c. Each has three pairs of wings.
    - (i) With two they covered their faces as a sign of awe and reverence.
      - (a) To cover the face prevented any irreverent beholding of God's face.
      - (b) It may also have shielded their faces from the brilliance of His glory.
    - (ii) The covering of the feet may have been a sign of humility and unworthiness.
    - (iii) And the final two wings are to carry them in all their service of God.
4. He hears the angelic proclamation of God's holiness (v. 3, 4a).
- a. Their continual job is to cry out in praise of God.
  - b. They sing out their praises of God to one another.
  - c. They proclaim that the Lord is holy, holy, holy.
    - (i) This is the only attribute that is repeated three times in Scripture.
    - (ii) If there was a priority to the attributes of God, this one may be preeminent.
    - (iii) We may not deduce from this the Trinity of God.
    - (iv) But it is rather to emphasize that the Lord is holy.
    - (v) Isaiah calls Him "the Holy One of Israel" 26 times in his book.
  - d. And that the whole earth is full of His glory.
    - (i) The whole created universe displays His glory.
    - (ii) The earth is the theater in which that glory is displayed.
5. He sees the effect that their voices produce (v. 4b)
- a. The foundations of the thresholds are shaken.

- b. The Temple was filled with smoke.
  - (i) God often appeared to His people in a cloud.
  - (ii) This is probably the glory-cloud of God's presence.

**B. What Holiness Is.**

1. From this vision we are to see the holiness of God. But what does that mean?
2. The fundamental idea is that of separation, which can be seen in two ways:
3. He is distinct from all His creatures and is exalted above them in infinite majesty.
  - a. <Ex. 15:11>: He is majestic.
  - b. <Isa. 57:15>: He is high and exalted.
  - c. He is the unapproachable One.
  - d. He is the One who is awful in majesty.
  - e. It awakens in man a consciousness of his own absolute creatureliness, which leads him to despise himself.
    - (i) Man is a creature who is absolutely dependent upon the Creator for his existence.
    - (ii) But God is the One who is absolutely independent and stands in no need of anything.
4. Secondly, He is absolutely pure and separate from moral evil or sin.
  - a. This develops from His infinite majesty.
  - b. He is not only separate and exalted in highest majesty above His creation, but is infinitely separated from sin and evil as well.
    - (i) He can have no communion with sin <Job 34:10>.
    - (ii) He cannot look upon evil <Hab. 1:13>.
  - c. Put positively: He is absolutely pure, ethically perfect.
    - (i) Man sees his insignificance in the sight of God's awful majesty.
    - (ii) Man sees his impurity in the light of God's holiness.
    - (iii) This is particularly revealed in God's moral law.
      - (a) It is to impress upon us the holiness of God.
      - (b) And to urge upon us the necessity of living a holy life (Berkhof 74).
    - (iv) And of course, in the face of Christ, the Holy and Righteous One, we see its highest and clearest revelation.
5. So God is infinitely exalted in majesty and purity.

**II. Therefore, You Need a God-given Righteousness to Dwell in His Presence (vv. 5-7).**

- A. In God's Presence Comes the Recognition of One's Own Sinfulness (v. 5).**

1. We see in Isaiah a proper reaction to God's holiness.
  2. Isaiah pronounces a curse upon himself (v. 5a).
    - a. "Woe" indicates that calamity is about to come or has come already.
    - b. He says, "Because I am undone": I am cut off, doomed to die.
  3. Because he recognizes his sin and that of his fellows (v. 5b,c).
    - a. Isaiah was merely a man, a man of unclean lips.
    - b. He could not praise God with pure lips as the Seraphim.
    - c. Praise is a privilege, not the right of every man.
    - d. Only those cleansed of guilt may offer it.
    - e. His depravity prevented him from praising God as he should.
    - f. Depravity is most often manifested at the lips (Cf. James 3, the tongue).
    - g. The rest of the people were in the same condition; it is always universal.
  4. He realized this in seeing God (v. 5d).
    - a. Others have feared death when they beheld God.
      - (i) Minoah and his wife [Judges 13].
      - (ii) Hagar (Gen. 16).
    - b. It is the infinite distance between the creature and the Creator that creates this prostrating effect.
    - c. God's presence to the sinner is a source of absolute terror.
    - d. But to the righteous a source of blessing.
- B. *And The Need of Cleansing to Be in His Presence (vv. 6-7).***
1. Having recognized his need was only the first step.
  2. To dwell in God's presence required holiness.
  3. And God must provide that holiness (vv. 6-7).
    - a. A Seraph flew to Isaiah with a burning coal from the altar (v. 6).
    - b. The fire is symbolical of purification (v. 7).
      - (i) It was necessary that the prophet have clean lips.
      - (ii) He was being sent out as a spokesman for God.
      - (iii) God alone could cleanse his lips.
      - (iv) The prophet was a picture of what all of God's people are called to be.
    - c. Then comes the inspired explanation without which the symbolism would be meaningless.
      - (i) The significance is Isaiah's iniquity is taken away, his sin is forgiven.
      - (ii) All the signs and seals the Lord gives us must be accompanied by the Word in order that we don't misunderstand them and end up in superstition.
      - (iii) First comes the symbol, the burning stone.
      - (iv) Next, comes the explanation of what is symbolized, the forgiveness of his sins.

- (v) Not to a particular sin, but sin in general which must be dealt with before Isaiah can do what he is called to.
- d. God forgives his sin, because it has already been atoned for (v. 7d).
  - (i) Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.
  - (ii) God forgave him on the just basis of the future payment which Christ would render to satisfy God's justice.
  - (iiil) Isaiah was saved from being consumed in God's presence, because he was shielded by Christ's righteousness.

**Conclusion:**

1. God is an infinitely Holy God.
2. He commands His people to be holy as well.
3. God has separated you to Himself.
  - a. He has applied to you the benefits of Christ's work.
  - b. He has shielded you from His wrath by the righteousness of Christ.
  - c. He has cleansed you from your sin that you may dwell with Him.
4. And you are to reflect His holiness by living a separated life.
  - a. Separate from the world.
    - (i) Do not let the world dictate your priorities.
    - (ii) It is a world that does not know God.
    - (iiil) It inevitably runs toward evil continually.
  - b. Separate from sin.
    - (i) Sin is detestable to our holy God.
    - (ii) If our personal righteousness is described as filthy menstrual rags, how odious must our sin be!
    - (iiil) But God gave us His Son to remove that filth; we must not continue to live in it!
  - c. And separated to God.
    - (i) God calls us to be holy, for He is holy.
    - (ii) We are to be living sacrifices, dead to our own wills and desires, and alive to Him.
    - (iiil) <2 Cor. 6:14-18>.
    - (iv) Christ died that we should no longer live for self, but for Him.
5. God calls upon us as the Seraphim to give praise to His Name.
  - a. This is merely to cry out holy, holy, holy.
  - b. But it includes meditating upon God and His attributes.
  - c. And living a life of humility according to His precepts.
  - d. It is living a life of faith in Jesus Christ, and being conformed to His image.
6. However, if you do not separate yourself from these things, God will separate you from Himself.
  - a. Evil men cannot dwell with God.

- b. If you live a lifestyle of evil, you demonstrate that you are not born of this holy God.
- c. On that great and terrible day, the Lord will command that you depart from Him into everlasting fire, which was prepared for such as love sin.
- d. And you will be lifted up by the holy angels and cast into hell which will open its mouth to swallow you alive forever.
- e. Turn from evil; come out from among them; turn to Christ who alone can make one righteous; and live forever with the Holy God. Amen.