

The Holiness of God

We sang a song this morning: “In the presence of Your infinite might, I am so small and frail and weak.” Today we are going to share on the King enthroned, things that makes you feel very small, frail and weak, which it should. But I cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy, God, how awesome is Your name.” So may the Lord bless this time.

Lord, I really do have a sense of sharing things way too big, but it is in Your Word, and it is a wonderful section of Scripture. Lord, how majestic is Your name! How great You are! Lord, I just pray that You would reveal Your Word to us. Everything that is going to be said, we know. I pray that Your Spirit would really enable us to hear what You have to say. In Your name, I pray. Amen.

The Attributes of God

How do you view God? What is your view of God? If I had to ask you for one word that describes God, what would it be? “Love, powerful, majestic, sovereign, Holy, Awesome.” There are fifteen attributes of God, and you have mentioned some of them. What is an attribute? It is a characteristic; it reveals what you are. It is a defining quality about your character. So when I ask who is God, what are the defining qualities or characteristics of God? Now I know we do not like theology around here, but theology is the study of God. And in that study of God you find at least fifteen attributes in Scripture. I will name the attributes. Then I am going to ask you which is the most important or which most defines the Lord?

God is infinite.

He is self-existing, without origin.

God is immutable, He never changes

God is self-sufficient, He needs no other person to be who He is.

God is omnipotent, He is all-powerful.

God is omniscient, He is all knowing.

God is Omnipresent, He is everywhere.

God is wise,

God is faithful,

God is good,

God is just,

God is merciful, God is gracious,

God is loving,

God is holy,

God is glorious.

These are some attributes that man has put together from Scriptures.

Now let me ask you another question. From heaven's point of view, not man's, what is the greatest attribute of God? God is holy. Now man would say, especially modern-day Christians, "God is love. First and foremost, He is love." But God says, "First and foremost, I am holy." So today we are going to consider holiness from two Scriptures, Isaiah 6 and Revelation chapter 4.

Let me read a definition of holiness. Holiness is actually very difficult to describe, but of all the attributes of God holiness is the one that most uniquely describes Him. In reality it is a summation of all of His other attributes. The word 'holiness' refers to a separateness, His otherness. The fact that He is unlike any other being. It indicates His complete and infinite perfection. Holiness is the attribute that binds all others together.

Andrew Murray says, "Holiness is that awful glory by which divinity is separated from all that is created."

So when we go to Scriptures we will be considering holiness and the realm of God, and this is where it is absolutely amazing and astounding.

Isaiah's Vision

Isaiah 6:1-5: "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. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filled with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'"

"In the year that King Uzziah died," King Uzziah had just died, (an earthly king,) and the Lord lifts Isaiah's eyes up and says, "I am going to show you who I am as King."

"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne." Straightway, we can see that on His throne there is One sitting upon it who is ruling and reigning. There is One sitting on the throne. And as you see what holiness is, that separateness, that transcendent otherness, we can see that the throne of God is high above any throne on earth, and He is reigning. That is what he means by the Lord sitting on a throne, He is reigning. While on earth kings come and go; the Lord reigns.

"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne lofty and exalted." And we see here that our Lord is lofty and exalted, high above everything, every ruler, every authority, He is high and lifted up. He is exalted.

"with the train of His robe filling the temple." So we have God sitting on a throne highly exalted, and His train fills the temple. The train is a sign of His royalty and Kingship, and His train fills the temple. In other words, there is no room in this throne for any other throne. He is the only sovereign Lord.

This is a vision contrasting with Uzziah who had just died. Isaiah was familiar with throne rooms, but here the Lord is showing him His throne, the place where He reigns, where He rules.

Verse 2: "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."

Ezekiel 1:24: "I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings."

These seraphim are mighty creatures which God made, and He made them for one purpose, and they are not silent; they are speaking. But also when they fly, when they move, there is a great sound that comes from their wings. This gives an indication of the majesty and the greatness of God's throne room. It is a place of great excitement and movement. It is a place of great power. And we see these seraphim who stand there. They covered their face because of the glory of the Lord Who was right there, and even they who were created to glorify the Lord do not look upon the Lord. They covered their feet, because the ground they are on is holy. When they fly, there is this great sound like the Almighty as they do God's bidding. These are great creatures.

They do this proclamation and cry out, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." Two sing this to the other two, and the other two sing it, and it goes back and forth over the throne of God. Back and forth is this great sound. In another place in Scriptures it says that their voices are like thunder, like a trumpet. So in the heavenlies over the throne of God there is this continual cry of "Holy, Holy, Holy" in a mighty thunderous voice. And so powerful are these voices that the foundations of the threshold tremble. Isn't that amazing?! So powerful is this message that the threshold or the posts that hold up the temple shake. Can you imagine the power that would shake the temple of God in heavens? And the message that they have is, "Holy, Holy, Holy." So the holiness of God is connected; it is part and parcel of His kingdom—the exalted Lord, His reigning, His throne room. Holiness is the first thing that you hear in heaven. It is the major thing, "Holy, Holy, Holy" is the Lord God Almighty.

It also says, "The whole earth is full of His glory." And glory is the revelation of holiness. It is the outflow of God's holiness, and that holiness, Scripture says, covers the earth. It fills the earth, and it also fills the heavens. So we see that the holiness of God fills the earth. This is an awesome thing. Can you imagine being Isaiah and seeing this vision?. Of course, your reaction would be like his when he said, "Then I said, 'Woe is me for I am ruined.'" Isaiah's major thing was to speak the word of God, but he said, "I am ruined." It is like when you see the Lord high and lifted up, all of your service, all of your ministry is just, "Lord, I am undone." I really appreciated our opening this morning, and all that goes on in the world, which has gone on from Isaiah's time onward, of course from before him. But there has always been the Lord reigning and ruling in this manner, high and lifted up and exalted. And holiness has always been the cry in heaven. Praise the Lord. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing.

"While the temple was filling with smoke." Why smoke?

John's Vision of the Exalted King

Revelation 15:8: "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power."

So the picture is a throne room unlike any on earth full of majesty, full of royalty with an exalted King, with four creatures right by the throne who are crying out in a thunderous voice loud enough to shake the temple threshold, crying out, "Holy, Holy, Holy." And the smoke from their praise, from the glory of God fills the temple. So the temple is filled with His train, with His royalty, and with His power, and His glory. That is an amazing thing, isn't it? That is the God we serve.

Let me read you a quote from Spurgeon: "The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord that they are humbled and filled with holy awe and even dread and alarm." I love that, the most spiritual and sanctified minds are still filled full of dread and awe when they view these things.

Revelation 4:1-10: "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, 'Come up here.'

I just want to stop right here. "Come up here." Do you know that vantage point matters? I like to watch the Ukraine War and how they are fighting, the strategy and such. I would love to be a General one day. I do not want to go out there shooting, but to strategize is great. They have the drones, and the one who is doing the drones is standing on the ground and looking through the trees. They are trying to hide, and he might see just a few feet. When you lift that drone go up, and all of a sudden, what you can see is so much bigger, and the enemy is over there. Height and vantage point matter in warfare. But you know, vantage point matters for you and I as well. How do we view the world? How do we view our situation? And this call is really a call to us as well, to come up here. Come see from heaven's viewpoint, the earth. Come see heaven from heaven's viewpoint. What does heaven see? What does heaven worship? And then it really helps in your own disposition, so come up here. Let's all hear the call. "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

Verse 2: "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne." Just as in Isaiah a throne is in heaven, and there is One sitting on that throne reigning and ruling.

Verse 3: "And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads."

So this description is a little different from Isaiah. It is the same throne and the same Lord on the throne, but now around the throne there are twenty-four thrones or seats, with twenty-four elders sitting on the throne, with white raiment and crowns. Now this is where you make a

mistake when you start going to commentaries. I do not know how many interpretations, two or three at least, but in all the interpretations at least the church is represented. Many feel that these are representative of the church if not in part maybe the whole. But there are twenty-four elders on the thrones, and they play an important part coming up.

Verse 5: "Out from the throne came flashes of lightening and sounds and peals of thunder." Here again we have a lot of sound, majestic sound coming from the throne of God. You Bible scholars, what does this remind you of? "Flashes of lightening and sounds and peals of thunder."

Exodus 19:9, 18-19: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you...Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder,"

You know out of the throne came flashes of lightening and sounds and peals of thunder. One of my favorite things to do, up to a point, is to listen to thunder. A big thunder storm comes, and there is nothing better than to go out on the back porch and hear the thunder, see the thunder. You feel its rumble and its power, and you see the wind blowing trees, the sky blackens, and depending on what kind of thunder it is, it is kind of nice, until it starts flashing around you, striking the trees near you and you are shaking, then you go into the house for protection, as if that is going to protect you. But there is a great power demonstrated in thunder and sounds.

So out of the throne comes flashes of lightening and sounds and peals of thunder. All the while what else is happening? The whole temple is filling up with smoke. There is the sound of crashing coming from the throne, and the seraphim are still crying out, "Holy, Holy, Holy." This was written in AD 60, and they have been crying out since the time they were created, since Isaiah's time they have been crying out.

Rev. 4:5-6,8 "And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind... And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings were full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty who was, and who is and who is to come. '"

So day and night this sound, this cry of the seraphim goes on continuously, forever and ever. That antipathy is going back and forth of, "Holy, Holy, Holy." I have gone to some pains just to describe to you what the Scriptures says about the throne room of God. How majestic it is, how full of wonder and power it is! It is a place that really startles the mind.

Revelation 1:17: "When I (John) turned and saw the One whose face was like the sun shining in strength, I fell at His feet as a dead man." He just fainted when he saw the Lord in that kind of glory.

Ezekiel did the same when he had his vision of the throne of God. He fell down. When Isaiah saw God's glory, it laid him out. He did not faint or fall down, but he had such a great sense of unworthiness before the Lord.

What is our reaction? After being in this for two or three months, I had many things to say, but I cannot say any of it. There are only two things that really struck me, and they are very simple. So I am just going to share with you simply what probably you would also say. What is our first reaction to all of this? What do we do? We fall down and worship Him.

Revelation 4:10: "The twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him." The twenty-four elders represent us.

Chapter 5:8: "When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down to worship Him."

V. 14: "The four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen. 'And the elders fell down and worshipped Him."

Another section talks about the seraphim and the elders all falling down before the Lord. That is the first reaction to this grand cry, this majestic cry in heaven of "Holy, Holy, Holy,." You have to fall down and worship. You have to exalt the One who sits on the throne who is infinitely holy. His holiness is transcendentally above anything we can even know, and we are represented there. There is also in Scripture what is called the 'holy echo 'in the throne room on earth.

In Psalm 99, in heaven you have this cry of a thrice Holy God, that means "Holy" said three times. And there is an echo on earth of worship for the One who is holy. Look for the words "holy is He."

Verses 1-4: "The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! The Lord is great in Zion, and He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He." (That is the first Holy.)

Verse 5: "Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; Holy is He."

Verse 9: "Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill, for holy is the Lord our God." (Three holies)

Now one of the greatest honors I think that we have is to worship the Holy One.

Verse 3: "Let them praise your great and awesome name; Holy is He."

We are to praise and worship His great and awesome name because He is Holy. What a privilege! What is the position of our worship?

Verse 5: "Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; Holy is He."

That is the only place to worship a God who reigns in such majesty.

V. 9: "Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill, for holy is the Lord our God." To me that means bringing all of God's people together at His holy hill and worshipping the Lord Jesus, because He is holy.

The Heavenly Antiphony

In the heavens there is an antiphony (a musical term) between the Seraphim, from one group to another, singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” But at the same time there is an antiphony from heaven and earth. While there is that going on in heaven there are God’s people on earth echoing the cry of heaven, Holy, Holy, Holy, and we on earth are echoing that cry. There are a lot of songs in Revelation that we can echo on earth. If you go through and read the songs, we get the privilege of echoing on earth what is being said in worship in heaven. What a wonderful thing to be able to come and worship. That was the first thing that struck me.

Worship and Fear are Connected Together

The second thing that struck me was the connection between God’s holiness and fear in worship. This is so unlike the world today whose god is just the guy next door or some lovable person. Listen to these Scriptures:

Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. (Exodus 15:11)

I will worship towards His Holy temple. (Psalm 138:2)

Oh fear the Lord, ye His holy ones. (Psalm 34:9)

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, fear before Him. (Psalm 96:9)

Let them praise Thy great and terrible name. (terrible means awesome. Psalm 99:3)

Holy is He perfecting the holiness in the fear of the Lord. (II Corinthians 7:1)

Like as He which called you is holy, be yourselves also holy and pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. (I Peter 1:15)

Who shall not fear Thee Oh Lord and glorify Your name for Thou alone art holy. (Revelation 15:4).

In God’s presence there is holiness and we are to bow low in humility and worship the Holy One. Anything else is unacceptable.

Brothers and sisters, we love the Lord; there needs to be an awesome reverence, a reverential awe in our outlook to our Lord and Savior. The Scriptures call it fear but it is like a reverential awe, and we need to have that. Fear of the Lord is actually good.

Psalm 2:11 says, “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.”

“At your holy temple I will bow in fear and reverence before You.” (Psalm 5:7)

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.” (Psalm 19:9)

“Ye that fear the Lord praise Him! Glorify and fear Him.” Psalm 22:23)

We can see how it goes together—holiness and worshipping the Lord in the fear of the Lord. It is not a bad thing to fear God. It is not a bad thing to have a great, holy reverence for Him. Does you wonder if this is really true? But when you view holiness from the viewpoint of heaven, it is

proclaimed in an unmistakable loud voice continually, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” and everything around that throne falls down in awe and reverential fear, and worships Him.

I think in today’s world we need to fear the Lord and know that He reigns. God says, “Why are you worried about man? Fear Me, I am God, I am the Lord. Man is not.” We need to fear the Lord which brings a humility about our outlook towards each other and towards the Lord. Why do I say towards each other? Because when the Holy God touches something and it becomes holy, we are to have a reverential fear in that thing. And what are we called as God’s people? A royal priesthood, a holy nation. What are the Scriptures called? It is called the Holy Scriptures. Our own bodies are called the temple of God, therefore, “Be ye holy for I am holy.” There should be a humility towards all that God calls holy, a reverential awe. I do not want to be in reverential awe of you, but when we come together, there should be a great humility one to another that comes because of the fear of the Lord.

The other thing is that we have a great privilege when we come here every Sunday morning to worship the Lord, to worship the Holy One. There should be within our hearts a reverence, and I believe there is, a great reverence for this time to worship the Lord. One of my favorite songs is, “In Your presence, Lord, in Your presence, Lord, I desire to be continually in Your presence, Lord.” As I have been studying this, I said, “In the presence of a holy God, I desire to be in Your presence?” When I have trouble with sin or temptations dog me, I worship the Lord by just joining the seraphim and saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.” It seems as though the temptations are gone. When I lose the sense of being in touch with the Lord, I just begin to worship, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God the Almighty.” When we see what is going on in the world, we sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” because that holiness is connected to His great reigning, His power, His might, and it has given me a sense of connectedness to the Lord. It has given me a sense of love and respect for each one of you because we are called a holy temple. It is an amazing thing!

Let’s pray:

Lord, these things are quite remarkable. Lord, Your holiness is just unfathomable. We are so grateful that such a holy God would love such as we. Lord, we bless Your name and praise You. In Your name I pray. Amen.