Isaiah 6:1-7 – God's Holiness and Man's Sinfulness
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Intro: On the topic of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. The second part, Man's sinfulness, "is easy to understand. But the first part, God's Holiness, is not. We'll be looking at **Isaiah 6:1-7**. You might ask, How can a sinful man like me hope to talk about God's holiness? How can I possibly describe the infinite Creator?" One aspect of God's character described in theology is His transcendence. His transcendence means that He is wholly unlike us, wholly independent of the material universe. Any attempts to describe Him come up woefully short. All we can do is scratch the surface. If God is like the vast ocean, then perhaps today we can dip our finger in, raise it, and know just a little bit more about one aspect of His nature. **READ Romans 11:33-36**.

Isaiah v 1-4: Isaiah was privileged with a glimpse into God's throne room. God is transcendent. By our own efforts, He is unknowable. But in theology, there is another attribute of God, and that is that He is immanent. And that means that God, whom we couldn't know by ourselves, chose to reveal Himself to us. He shows us as much as our little brains can grasp about who He is. God opened up the veil of heaven for a moment and allowed Isaiah (and, through Isaiah, allows us) to get a glimpse of His very throne room. What Isaiah sees there is both awesome and terrifying.

READ Isaiah 6:1-4 1st - God is on the throne: Yahweh is on His throne. Sometimes down here on Earth, it is easy to forget this. He is sovereign. He is in control. And He has a plan for each of us. And what is His throne like? It says it is high and lifted up. God's throne in heaven is above everything else, a physical reminder of His place as divine ruler over everything in the universe. **2nd - The Seraphims are worshiping God:** This is the only place in the Bible where the seraphim are mentioned. They are a special order of angel, and are pictured flying in God's throne room. Their 6 wings cover their face and feet. It may be they are covering their face because God's glory is too intense for them to look at, and their feet as an act of respect, much like God told Moses to take off his sandals on the holy ground. Their primary duty appears to be worshiping God, calling attention to His holiness and majesty. We see they are also involved as agents of purification, taking the burning coal to Isaiah and announcing his forgiveness. **3rd - God's Holiness is the focus:** Above all, this glimpse into heaven shows us God's holiness. In heaven, we see the angels are saying, "holy, holy, holy." They are not saying, "love, love, love." They are not saying, "mercy, mercy, mercy." God is all of these, and more; BUT there is something significant in the fact that the focus in heaven is on God's HOLINESS. ALL God's character qualities are equal in importance. They cannot be ranked or prioritized one above the other. He is infinite, and His attributes are absolute perfection.

However, as people, we are finite and imperfect, so our understanding of God comes in steps. Therefore, we must understand certain qualities of God before we can fully grasp the others. And for us, the starting point for understanding God is **His holiness**. Other aspects of God's character will not make sense unless we see that He is completely different from us, without even a hint of sin or corruption. And that is what "holiness" means. Holiness means to be set apart. God is set apart from us. **READ Isaiah 59:2**. Applying this, for example, to Christ's death on the cross, we cannot understand why He had to die or why sin has to be punished unless we first realize that God is Holy. His holiness means He can't just ignore our sin. Our sin separates us from Him; therefore, it has to be completely dealt with.

What does it mean that God is holy? 1st - He cannot tolerate sin – READ Numbers 23:19a. It is technically incorrect to say God can do everything. God cannot sin. His motives are pure. His actions are right. His plans are perfect. BUT, since God cannot sin. That means we can trust Him completely. **2nd – What does it mean to us that God is Holy? He hates sin – READ Proverbs 8:13.** God does not tolerate sin. He hates it in every form. He hates laziness. He hates greed. He hates adultery. He hates gossip. He hates lust. Name the sin, the list goes on and on.

Application: Do you hate sin as God does? The answer, of course, is "no." Of course not. We are far too tolerant of sin, especially the sin in our own lives. Peter said, "Be holy as He is holy." **(1 Pet 1:15-16)** In other words, we should hate sin as God does. Of course, this is easier said than done. How do we do this? We need to have the right standards. We need to spend more time looking at God and His character than at the world. When we compare ourselves to the sinful world around us, we don't feel that we are very sinful. Our sins seem small and insignificant. But when we look into God's throne room, as Isaiah did, then we realize how big our sin is. Remember that to hate sin, we need to get closer to God. The closer we are to God, the more time we spend with Him, the more our hatred for sin will grow naturally.

3rd - What does it mean to us that God is Holy? He will judge sin. READ Hebrews 9:27. God's justice flows from His holiness. Because God is all-good, He will one day judge all sin. One of two people must take the judgment for your sin, either you or Jesus. **4th - What is true worship?** The angels full time job appears to be worshiping God. In His throne room, God is going to be worshiped how He wants to be worshiped. Therefore, from the angels, we can learn an important lesson about the nature of true worship. True worship is extolling, lifting up. True worship is God-focused. The angels are focused on God's character and on His work in the world. We must worship God in the way that He wants to be worshiped. And that means we must focus on God, His character, and His work, and not focus on ourselves.

A few simple questions we can ask before singing a worship song: **A.** Is God the focus or me? By nature, we are selfish creatures. He is on the throne, He is the Creator, He is the most valuable, the most desirable, the most absolutely perfect Being. He is the center of everything. Worshipping Him changes our focus from ourselves, our concerns to the reality in heaven. **B.** Is God mentioned more than me? (It doesn't mean we can never sing songs about our desire to follow God, but it does mean we should be careful about making ourselves the center.) **C.** Is the song true? The angels sang "holy, holy, holy." What they sang was true and theologically sound. **D.** Does it please God? God's name is holy and should be respected. Personal worship should be ALL our BEST effort, energy, passion. In **Isaiah 6,** we see that God is awesome, glorious, and holy. **READ Exodus 20:7**. God's name is so holy and so important that one of the ten commandments is to respect it. **What does that mean?** It means NOT to do anything that dishonors His name, any inappropriate use of His name. Think about when you ignorantly use His name in vain, like in "Oh My God". Going deeper: How have we dishonored Him by our actions and/or our thoughts? **Application:** Our job is to declare God's holiness and glory. God seeks praise and glory for all He has done. He is the Creator, He is the redeemer, He is the King, He deserves the glory! If someone tries to take glory for themselves, it is unjust and robbing God. Like when someone steals an author's manuscript and publishes it as their own. When we try to glorify ourselves for our successes/achievements, we are taking it away from its rightful owner, God. **READ Isaiah 42:8**.

NOW, that we addressed God's Holiness, let's look at our sinfulness (**8** points). **READ Isaiah 6:5-6 (1) Woe is me!** Isaiah was given an amazing opportunity. BUT, he wasn't prideful. Of all the people in the world, he was chosen for this privilege. His instant response was "Woe is me!" When he saw God's holiness and glory, he was immediately overcome with the weight of his own sin. He realized the depth of wickedness in his own heart. The feelings of guilt from his sin overwhelmed him. Sometimes this word "woe" is used in the Bible to denote an inescapable distress or a feeling of grief so serious that words can't express it. **(2)** Is our sin serious? Most, if not all of us, would answer, YES. **READ Romans 3:23. (3)** We realize sin is serious when we have the right standard (God's holiness). Isaiah found the right standard. He compared himself to God's standard, and he came up woefully lacking. By himself, Isaiah was completely hopeless. Isaiah understood the depth of his sin. Remember, Isaiah is about to become a prophet. Seeing God, he came face to face with himself, and he didn't like what he saw. And he felt guilty. Guilt is not a nice feeling.
(4) Our human nature is to escape feelings of guilt. People try to avoid guilt, rather than facing up to their own sins and running away, trying to escape, to lose themselves. They want to distract themselves from thinking about their own lost condition. People don't want to be confronted with their guilt. It is time for us to come face-to-face with who we are. It's time to take a good, long look in the mirror. We are sinners (saved by His grace). **(5) Look in the mirror: who am I?** God has given us this mirror, His Word that shows us His standards and how we fall short. His Spirit convicts us of our sin and guilt. **John 16:8**. Who are we? We are the **667** sins mentioned in the Bible! When Isaiah saw God, he saw himself in that list. And he was overwhelmed by it. **(6)** Have you come to the point where you can say, "Woe is me?" We must come face to face with ourselves before we can move forward to the place God wants us to go; we must first, like Isaiah, say, "Woe is me! I am unclean. God did not reveal this to Isaiah to rub him in his own guilt. No. He did it to show him the true way of escape, which is only through God's mercy and forgiveness. Created us in His image, we have great value in His sight. He loves us. He wants to cleanse us from all these things. He wants to set us free. **(7) God's forgiveness (v6-7) & (8) Man's Atonement**: Moving forward from "woe is me." It is good to come to the point where we can say "woe is me." But God does not want us to stay there. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." It is right to mourn over sin. But we don't have to mourn forever. Look what happened to Isaiah in verses 6-7. **READ Isaiah 6:6-7.** Our guilt is taken away. Our sin is atoned for. Amen! The list of **667**? Gone, buried, burned. Isaiah was overwhelmed with guilt. He could not escape or get rid of it on his own. God took it away just like that. But note when God did this. He only took away Isaiah's guilt after Isaiah confessed. Isaiah confessed it verbally. Then God forgave him. How do we receive forgiveness? Through Christ! **READ 1 John 1:9**.

Application: 1. Do you know that your sin is serious? Have you sought to minimize it, justify it, or escape from confronting it? Just tell the Lord, "I have sinned. I am unclean. I have fallen short of your holy standards. He will remove your sin and take away your guilt WHEN you put your faith in Jesus as Lord. **2.** If you have confessed, then embrace God's forgiveness. He has cleansed you. He has taken your sin away. He has taken it as far as the east is from the west. Do not live in the past. Do not walk around slumped over because of the weight of your sin. God has removed it. Look forward, not backward. Thank Him for His awesome love and forgiveness.

Conclusion: How do we become Holy? People become like the God they worship. And our God is holy. He is not just one holy. He is "holy, holy, holy" for all eternity. His holiness is infinite. We have seen our own sinfulness, having committed too many sins to count. But God, in His infinite holiness and Grace, takes away our sin if we ask Him to. And then **1 Peter 1:16** – *You shall be holy for I am holy*. A seemingly impossible task. How do we become holy? **Sanctification!** The intentional alignment of our life with the character of Christ. He gives us the strength to have victory over sin. First, we MUST be in Christ! JESUS remembers our worship and NOT our sins!

Now turn to your neighbor and say Be Holy as He is Holy, Holy, Holy! **REFLECT:** Reflect on your own sin and ask for His forgiveness. And thank God for His holiness. Ask Him to help you be holy as He is holy.
Reference: *Study and Obey by Jason Dexter*)
Resource: Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate *by Jerry Bridges*.