

Behold Your God — Holy

The holiness of God is so central to biblical teaching that it is said, “Holy is His name,” (Luke 1:49. When the Lord was instructing His disciples how to pray, the first line of the prayer states, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name...” Jesus was saying when you pray, God’s name should be regarded as holy or “Hallowed.” The remainder of the prayer follows the exaltation of God as holy. In heaven, the presence of God is surrounded by declarations that God is holy, holy, holy. Our attitude and regard toward God affects every aspect of our lives. We have noticed that God is not only the Creator of the entire universe and all that is within it, He is also Lord over all. God’s holy nature is inescapable. In every exposure we may have to God in worship, praise, prayer or spiritual life, God is majestic in holiness. When Moses stepped aside to behold the bush that was burning with fire, but was not consumed, he was confronted with the holiness of God. Immediately after calling to Moses from the burning bush, God declared His name and holiness.

Exodus 3:5-6 NKJV Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

This is what theologians call a theophany or a physical manifestation of God in the Old Testament. God in His holiness had come down into the common desert and turned it into holy ground. How to approach a holy God is central to the Exodus and the symbolism of the tabernacle. When God declared Himself to him, Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. When Moses asked “What is Your name?”, God said, “I AM WHO I AM.” You shall tell the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.” The LORD God of your fathers has sent me to you. Throughout Moses’ tenure, he was granted special access into the holy presence of God. Remember when Moses ascended the holy mountain of God and was eyewitness of astounding miracles. He heard the voice of God and witnessed all of the plagues upon Egypt. He tasted heaven’s bread and stood beside the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud. He witnessed God dry up the Red Sea for Israel to cross and destroy Pharaoh and his armies by waves as the sea returned to its place. Moses was not satisfied. He wanted more. He craved the ultimate spiritual experience. He wanted to see the face and glory of God. His request was denied, but God did allow Moses to come close to His presence.

Exodus 33:19 NKJV Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion.”

Exodus 33:20-21 NKJV But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.

Exodus 33:22-23 NKJV So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

When Moses came down from the mountain, his face was shining and the people were terrified. So Moses put a veil over his face so that he could approach the people. The terror was directed at the face of a man who had come close to the holy God and His glory. If they were afraid in the presence of a man who had seen God and was reflecting His glory, how can anyone gaze directly into the LORD’s holy face?

The benediction and hope of every Jew is to behold God’s face.

Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’

Throughout the Old Testament, people would seek the face of God in order to find mercy and grace to help. Often the Psalms spoke of seeking the LORD’s face and finding Him.

Many years later, the prophet Isaiah Ben Amoz had an amazing encounter with the Lord.

Isaiah 6:1 NKJV In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Uzziah became king in Jerusalem at the age of sixteen and reigned for fifty-two years. He began his reign in godliness and was blessed by God. His life and career ended in disgrace when he entered the temple in pride and claimed the rights of a priest. When the priests attempted to stop him, Uzziah became enraged and while he was screaming, leprosy broke out on his forehead. He lived out the remainder of his life in isolation in his house, cut off from the house of the LORD, (2 Chronicles 26:21).

In the year that Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the true King.

When he saw the Lord, the train of His robe filled the temple. God will share His glory with no one for He alone is the Lord God Almighty.

Isaiah 6:2-3 NKJV Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”

Take note of the word Lord as it is printed in most of your Bibles.

In Isaiah 6:1, the word Lord is printed with one capital letter and then lowercase letters. That is contrasted with LORD (with all caps) that occurs here and in many other texts. “Lord” represents the name Adonai which means “sovereign one.” When “LORD” appears in all capitals it represents the holy name of God, Jahweh, (the name of God that was presented to Moses at the burning bush). Adonai is a title for God and Jahweh is His sacred and unspeakable name.

Psalm 8:1 NKJV O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens!

Psalm 110:1 NKJV The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

Here, Jahweh is telling Adonai Jesus to sit at His right hand. When Jesus was called Lord, He was given the title Adonai. He was invested with all of the glory and honor as King of kings and Lord of lords that had only been given to God the Father. The different uses of the words “Lord” and “LORD” indicate the care given to communicate God’s holy nature.

When Isaiah saw the Lord, he recognized that he was standing before the true King upon his throne.

Isaiah 6:2-3 NKJV Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”

Seraphim are not humans who have been stained with sin. Yet even in their exalted position in direct contact with God’s holiness, they cover their faces from the face of God. The song of the seraphim calling to one another recognized the holiness of God. “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” God is three times holy. The repetition is a form of emphasis in the Hebrew language. Jesus used this method of repetition when He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you.” When something is mentioned three times in succession it elevates the message to the highest importance. In scripture, this elevation of an attribute of God is mentioned two times. Once here in Isaiah 6 and the second in Revelation.

Revelation 4:8 NKJV The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

Here the four mighty cherubim who stand around the throne of God, declare the Lord God Almighty is: “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Here they are referring to the One “Who was and is and is to come!” When they declare the Lord is holy, the redeemed who are around the throne fall down and worship Him who

lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, our Lord and our God to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created,” (vs.11).

When the seraphim cry “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” the temple doors and thresholds were moved.

Isaiah 6:4-5 NKJV And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because 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.”

Isaiah was so undone at the holiness of God that he cried out, “Woe is me!” The word undone means destroyed, cut off, or coming apart at the seams. He was coming apart in the presence of God’s holiness and could find nothing good within himself. Isaiah was a man of integrity who was called of God, yet in God’s holy presence, all of his personal goodness was shattered. When he saw himself standing before the God Who is holy, holy, holy, Isaiah was destroyed and came apart. He felt undone in God’s holy presence and cried out, “I am a man of unclean lips.” Sometimes when we recognize the holy presence of God in our worship, prayer and praise, we have that recognition of our own corruption. Isaiah was shattered and could not stand in the temple before the LORD God Almighty.

Isaiah 6:6-7 NKJV Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

The Holy God is also a God of grace and mercy.

The seraphim quickly moved to provide the cleansing that was necessary. Isaiah experienced a purification and cleansing throughout.

What does the word “holy” mean?

No dictionary can adequately define the word holy. We often think of holiness as moral purity, being totally perfect in every detail. That is not the primary meaning of ‘holy’ in the Bible. Holy means ‘separate, to cut, or to separate.’ In modern language, it means ‘a cut above the rest.’ God’s holiness is more than separateness. His holiness exceeds the usual limits. God is high and above and beyond us. He is transcendent (to exist apart from and not subject to the limitations of the universe). He is higher and greater than any and all of His creation.

Consider what happened when the disciples were in the boat with the Lord and a great windstorm arose and waves beat into the boat.

Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat when they awoke him and asked, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” Jesus arose and took action that was so unusual that the disciples were exceedingly fearful of Him. His words, “Peace, be still,” brought the disciples to the realization that Jesus was a cut above and exceeded the usual limits. The disciple questioned, “What manner of man is this?” He did not fit into any category with which they were familiar.

They noticed the same difference when after fishing all night and catching no fish, Jesus told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat and their nets began to break.

When Peter saw this, he fell on his knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man,” (Luke 5:8). Instead of falling to his knees in worship, Peter cried, “Please leave. I cannot stand it.” He was in the presence of the holy Lord. The Lord is so far above and beyond us that He is Holy, Holy, Holy.

The same basic meaning is also applied to earthly things that are set apart or separated from the rest.

- Holy ground
- Holy place
- Holy tithe
- Holy censers
- Holy bread
- Holy nation
- Holy anointing oil
- Holy water
- Holy of holies

The things that are holy have been set apart, consecrated or sanctified by God and for God alone. When Moses stood before the burning bush, the common desert ground became holy ground in God’s presence. When the word holy is applied to God, it addresses every aspect of His being, nature and character. Every attribute of God is holy.

- His love, mercy and justice is holy.
- His knowledge is holy.
- His Spirit is Holy Spirit.

One of our greatest questions is: “why would God be mindful of us?”

Psalm 8:3-4 NKJV When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

When we allow God’s holiness to touch our lives, several things happen.

First, there is a sense of terror, fear and exposure in God’s holy presence. For

that reason, we may feel uncomfortable in the presence of the holy God. Second, in His holy presence there is fullness of joy. The joy comes when God in tender holy mercy, grace and love cleanses us from our sins and lifts us up to stand before Himself without condemnation. God has made provision for our condition through the holy and precious blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Romans 8:1 NKJV There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

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