

Glorious in Holiness

If I were to introduce God to you this morning, I would face a certain difficulty. He knows all about you, but it is impossible for you to know *all* about Him. There has been a popular series of books called, *Everything You Wanted to Know about _____, but Were Afraid to Ask*. Then, the popular title was _____ *for Dummies*. When you stop to think about it, the Bible could be titled *Everything you Wanted to Know about God*, but even that has proved too much for our finite minds and so now we can buy, online or at a bookstore, *The Bible for Dummies* to help us. In reality, what we really need is the Bible, inspired by God, and the Holy Spirit to guide our understanding. Out of all the things I read in the Bible, the first thing I would like to say when I go to introduce God to anyone is that He is *holy*. You get a glimpse of this in Isa 6. Isaiah had been a prophet of God to Israel's kings, but then he got to have a heavenly vision. Beforehand, he was very bold for God, but then he got a stronger dose of reality.

Isa 6:1-7 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, 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 mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

The job of each seraphim before God, with wings covering their face and their feet, was to cry "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." With that, the whole earth was filled with His glory. God was holy and Isaiah realized that, even though he was a prophet of God, he himself was not. It is no wonder that Isaiah records later that our righteousness is as filthy rags.

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

1. The Holiness of God -

We need to know God as He is to the extent that we are *able* to know Him. This is one of the great spiritual problems that we must always reckon with. Jehovah's Witnesses think claiming something is a mystery is ridiculous. They think that everything about God should be able to be understood by man. Of course, that would put us on a par with God and *that* is ridiculous. Because we are finite and limited, we cannot ever hope to perfectly, perfectly, *perfectly* know God inside and out. By definition, if we could know God that way, *we* would be God.

Ex 15:11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing

wonders?

Isa 55:8-9 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Rom 11:33-34 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Because there are things about God that are simply beyond us, we mistakenly fill in the blanks with our imagination. We *could* become better students of His Word to get understanding, but instead we resort to half-baked notions about Him. God is not just what we imagine Him to be.

1Chron 28:9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

2Cor 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and

bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

We are made in His image, but that does not mean we are *exactly* like Him. We are not everywhere at once. We do not live in eternity. His knowledge is infinite. We know what infinite means, but we can not *experience* infinity. This is what I am referring to as the holiness of God. We are made in His image, but in all His attributes He bestows upon us, God excels in them all. He is special, set apart, and holy. His love is holy: it is more special than ours. His power is holy: it is more special than ours. His righteousness is holy: it is more special than ours. In every 20 to 30 attributes defined in a theology class, every attribute is holy. Each one is bigger and perfect and excellent in infinite ways. If you take the general meaning of the word *holy*, *saint*, or *sanctify* in the Bible, you get the idea of something special that sets you apart. We might be human, but as a saved child of God, we are special, set apart, or holy to God. God, in all of His characteristics, is set apart from anything we can perceive. When we think about the infinity of God, we begin to understand the holiness of God. After you try to stuff God into a box that you can carry around, you realize that there are so many attributes of God that the heavens could not contain Him.

2Chron 2:6 But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?

John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be

written. Amen.

When we apply this concept of holiness to God Himself, we start to recognize that God is unique, He is reserved unto Himself. In His holiness, He is separate from all else. Time and the universe were created by Him. It is because of this that we recognize that He is in the world, but He is separate from the world. We call His being *in* the world His imm-a-nence. This is an important term that can be confused with imm-i-nence. Imminence is what we use to talk about how Jesus is *about* to enter the world at the Rapture. Imm-a-nence, God is spiritually here in the world; imm-i-nence, Jesus is about to come in the Rapture. We call His being outside the world His *transcendent holiness*. He transcends the world. He goes beyond the world. He transcends whatever we could understand about Him. Whatever we understand about His attributes, He is bigger than that.

2. No other gods before Me -

Once we have an understanding of God's holiness, we can put a lot of other godmaking in perspective. This is the first commandment:

Exod 20:2-6 I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. **[The first commandment]**

4 **[The second commandment]** Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, **[jealousy is not**

necessarily wrong. Our jealousy is mostly born of lust for what others have. There is a righteous jealousy when you actually have a valid claim. God certainly *does* deserve all worship] visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Having no other gods before the one true God does not mean that you can have other gods in addition to God as long as you keep God as the primary one.

How many people practically revere superstars who are athletes, musicians, or actors? Movies have always had the super good guys vs. the super bad guys. You need them to create a conflict to make a story. Ultimately, they include pagan gods in their pantheon of superheroes. Raising up people to regard them as gods is not very far from the human heart. Such gods are fallible, imaginary, and have no power in themselves. We elect no Messiahs. The athletes, actors, and especially musicians will disappoint us. Can you imagine how the holy God of all creation regards our god making penchant? It is *because* He is so holy that makes our god making so loathsome and wicked.

3. Be ye holy for I am holy -

Such holiness in God has practical and spiritual effects for us. If we revere such a holy God, how shall we then live? This was the basis of a book of the same title by Francis Schaeffer. It comes from Ezekiel 33:10 -

Eze 33:10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in

them, how should we then live?

The title reflects Schaeffer's concern with the consequences of abandoning a biblical worldview and the resulting moral and cultural decay. It also encapsulates the central question of the book, which is how Christians should live in a world that increasingly rejects the truths of Christianity.

Holiness implies a concept of separation. Something that was considered holy was reserved for God's use, belonging only to God. If we truly want to pursue God, what we need to do then is pursue holiness.

Lev 19:2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

Lev 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.

1Pet 1:15-16 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation **[lifestyle]**;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

- Don't treat God as trivial

Don't look at God as your buddy. His concerns are not petty and trivial. Take time to take God seriously.

Num 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Ps 93:5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

- Worship in holiness

Sing with holiness and reverence and awe. The achievement of worship is not measured by how much of a good time you had. In holiness, joy is only part of the worship experience.

Ps 2:10-11 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
¹¹Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

When you look at the worship in the Temple, you see that they took God's worship *seriously*! They had the building clean and in order, they had the best of choirs, they paid attention to the details of the music. We could overemphasize these same things to the point of hyper-professionalism and outward worship, but the answer is not to swing back in the other direction of a party mentality.

- Live a separated life

Ps 101:1-4 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. **[God is merciful, but He is also the holy judge]**

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked *person*.

At the end of the service, it's nice to know that you had a good time. But *more* importantly, how wonderful would it be if we left here with a challenge to separate ourselves more in holiness to the Lord? Do we take God seriously enough to change our lives?

Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

On Sunday morning, January 24, 1861, Charles Haddon Spurgeon closed his sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle with these words:

An unholy Church! It is of no use to the world, and of no esteem among men. Oh, it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. And the larger the Church, the more influential, the worst nuisance does it become, when it becomes dead and unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world, have been brought upon her by an unholy Church.

Eight times in His Word, the Lord says, "Be holy, for I am holy!" Are we listening?

— Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*

When we undertook the work of the Lord as a church, we entered in a covenant of holy responsibility. The covenant is a statement about holy, separated life. We should reflect on that covenant. Here it is, a little boiled down for emphasis:

...we do now, in the presence of God and angels, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage...**to walk together in Christian love**; to strive for the advancement of this

church in knowledge, holiness, spirituality, and power; ... to regularly attend the services ...of this church; to sustain sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute by tithes and offerings cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry...

We also engage to maintain **family and secret devotions**; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; **to walk circumspectly in the world**, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and **exemplary in our deportment**; **...to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as beverage**; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to **watch over one another in brotherly love**, to remember each other in prayer, ...to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech, **to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation**

What is standing in your way of taking God seriously? We can't give up the cigarettes and the alcohol and drugs? We can't give up showing off our bodies? We can't give up our grudges? We can't give up our pursuit of our own dreams for the vision of God? We can't give up the things that make us feel comfortable for the greater experience of God in His holiness?

On the other hand, take on the pursuit of holiness with all of its joy, power, and peace. If you have not been saved because you want to live in carnal pleasure, you must be warned that living in sin and rebellion does not allow you any peace. Its power turns into futility. It will rob you of joy. In the end, it turns into an eternity in the judgment of God.

Isa 6:1-7, Isa 64:6

1. The Holiness of God - Ex 15:11, Isa 55:8-9, Rom 11:33-34, 1Chron 28:9, Rom 1:21, 2Cor 10:5, 2Chron 2:6, John 21:25
2. No other gods before Me - Exod 20:2-6
3. Be ye holy for I am holy - Eze 33:10, Lev 19:2, Lev 20:7, 1Pet 1:15-16, Num 23:19, Ps 93:5, 2:10-11, 101:1-4, Heb 12:1