

Isaiah 6:1-8
The Holiness of God

Holiness is so important that we find that Israel was a holy people, with a holy priesthood, who was anointed with holy oil, had holy garments, and who assured their holiness with washing, before they ministered in a holy place, serving and worshipping the holy God, that they might minister to and for the people the LORD commanded to be holy as HE is holy. This same commandment is spoken concerning those of us who have trusted in our holy Savior, been made holy by His grace, and are called to live in holiness by that same grace, to the end that He might present us to himself a holy people.

What does the word holy mean? The word holy means that which is set apart, or separate? When spoken of God, it means that God is set apart from all others, both gods, men, and all other creatures. The Creator is not the same as His creation. He is supreme over all things. There are none equal to Him. As we study, we will find that God's holiness encompasses all of His attributes and is the very essence of who He is.

Scripture shows us holiness is a matter of separation by declaring that the seventh day was set apart from all of the other days of week as holy (*Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:15-17*). We also see that the firstborn of every Israelite family was to be set apart as holy unto the LORD (*Exodus 13:1-2*). Later we see that the Levites were hallowed, or made holy in their place (*Numbers 3:11-13*). *Exodus 28-31* give us the narrative of the priesthood being hallowed with holy anointing oil, given holy clothing, that they might enter into the holy place, ministering for a holy people before the holy God. Should we consider the tabernacle and temple, we would see that the important places therein were the holy place and the most holy place. The holy place was set apart for the priests to do their work in, and the most holy place was set apart for the high priest to enter only on the day of atonement.

The Genesis Creation Account is given to us, not only to tell us about the creation of all things, but also to show us that the LORD is the only true God, being our Creator. He made all things. All of the things worshiped by man are but images and likenesses of His creation (*Romans 1:21-25*). Jeremiah plainly states, *"Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, He hath established the world by his wisdom, And hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, And he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings with rain, And bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Every man is brutish in his knowledge: Every founder is confounded by the graven image: For his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: In the time of their visitation they shall perish."* (*Jeremiah 10:11-15*) This is why we read, *"For all the gods of the nations are idols: But the Lord made the heavens."* (*Psalms 96:5*) The LORD calls on man to worship Him exclusively because of His solitary holiness: there is none beside Him (*Deuteronomy 32:39-40; Exodus 20:1-11*). There is no Creator other than the One Who created all things; and He is holy, being far above and separated from all other gods.

The Exodus from Egypt demonstrates to us the holiness of God, because God demonstrated that He is above Pharaoh, the greatest of kings in his day. *"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?"* (*Exodus 9:16-17*) God also demonstrated that He is above all the gods of men, by conquering all of the efforts made by those who worshiped them. *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord."* (*Exodus 12:12*) Having seen that the LORD killed the firstborn of all Egypt, parted the Red Sea, causing Israel to pass through on dry ground, and overthrowing Pharaoh and his army, Israel worshiped the LORD, saying, *"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"* (*Exodus 15:11*) The I AM, the LORD, the holy God of Israel is indeed separated from all rulers, powers, might, and all other gods: He alone is God, ruler of Heaven and Earth.

Joshua, having exhorted the people of Israel to serve the LORD, “said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.” (Joshua 24:19–20) The gods of men are normally thought to be quite broad in their tolerance and acceptance, and thus the worship of many gods is acceptable to them. The LORD, however, is indeed separated by them in that He allows the worship of Himself only. He is the God of truth, righteousness, and judgement; and He will allow no competitors. He says, “*for thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:*” (Exodus 34:14) And again, “*I am the Lord: that is my name: And my glory will I not give to another, Neither my praise to graven images.*” (Isaiah 42:8) While the gods of the people are idols and devils (Jeremiah 10:1-16; 1 Corinthians 10:20-22), the LORD is holy: He is the true God, and He alone. In fact, we find it truly stated that “*there is none holy as the LORD.*” (1 Samuel 2:2).

God’s holiness is also seen in that He has no equal at all. Not only do His people declare that there is none like Him (Exodus 15:11; Psalm 89:6-8), but God declares the same: “*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*” (Isaiah 40:25) “*To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, And compare me, that we may be like?*” (Isaiah 46:5) And He describes His holiness in that He is sovereign over all things, having determined the course of the universe before ever creating it. “*Remember the former things of old: For I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times the things that are not yet done, Saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, The man that executeth my counsel from a far country: Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*” (Isaiah 46:9–11) It is this sovereignty that also highlights God’s separation from all other gods. “*For I know that the LORD is great, And that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, That did he in heaven, and in earth, In the seas, and all deep places.*” (Psalm 135:5–6) There is none His equal, because no other god is the Creator of all things, who decreed and knew all things before the creation, and who is sovereign over all things. It is for this cause that we see the glorious exultation in God in the Revelation: “*And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*” (Revelation 4:8–11) Our God is holy, because He created all; and He is exalted in majestic might above all others

We also see the holiness of God in the fact that, although man is made in God’s image and likeness, God is not a man. “*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?*” (Numbers 23:19) God is both immutable and faithful: He does not change, and He is true to Himself and to His Word. Man is not like that, though man should seek to become more and more like God in holiness of living. (See also 1 Samuel 15:29; Hosea 11:9.)

God is also holy in His works. There is none who can work as He works. “*O Lord God of hosts, Who is a strong Lord like unto thee? Or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.*” (Psalm 89:8–10) And again we read, “*The works of the LORD are great, Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious: And his righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: The LORD is gracious and full of compassion. He sent redemption unto his people: He hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend is his name.*” (Psalm 111:2-4,9) The LORD’s works declare His glorious name, and evoke the praises of His people (Psalm 75:1). It is because of the LORD’s holiness in bringing about the Exodus that we find Israel rejoicing and triumphing in His

holiness (*Exodus 15:11*). We thus conclude that *“The LORD is righteous in all his ways, And holy in all his works.”* (*Psalms 145:17*)

The very name of the LORD is holy: there is no other name like His. He declared to Moses that His name is “I AM,” and proceeded to say, *“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.”* (*Exodus 3:14–15*) The very name of the LORD sets Him apart from all other gods, and is His exclusive glory and fame (*Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 42:8*).

When God appeared to Israel at Sinai, He also demonstrated that sinful man cannot approach unto His holiness (*Exodus 19&20*). He told Moses, *“Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”* (*Exodus 33:20*) The men of Bethshemesh learned that the hard way, when fifty thousand-seventy men died after opening the ark of the covenant (*1 Samuel 6:19-20*). It is for this reason that Jesus, the Holy One of God, came into the world, that He might bring God to us and man to God (See *John 1:14-18; 1 Peter 3:18*).

When God reveals Himself to man, He shows Himself to be beautiful in holiness. This is what we see in our text. Isaiah says He saw the train of the LORD filling the temple. His very presence was strikingly beautiful. David longed to see and experience this, saying, *“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”* (*Psalms 27:4*) The LORD stands apart in His beauty. This not only refers to what men might have seen in visions (See *Exodus 24:10-11*), but also to the character of the LORD. Every one of God’s attributes is beautiful and to be desired. There is no absolute and flawless perfection except in Him, and He is to be worshiped and desired to the exclusion of all others (*Exodus 20:1-6; 34:14; Psalm 73:24-26*). God is holy in the beauty of His being.

We must also recognize that God will be honored as holy. It was a very sad, yet instructive day in Israel when Nadab and Abihu died for offering foreign and unacceptable fire in the tabernacle. Moses told Aaron that day, *“Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”* (*Leviticus 10:3*) We find that the final judgment is about the holy exaltation of God alone: *“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.”* (*Isaiah 2:11*) *“Therefore hath enlarged herself, And opened her mouth without measure: And their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, And he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, And the mighty man shall be humbled, And the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, And God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.”* (*Isaiah 5:14–16*) Many today think lightly of hell and judgment, or dismiss them altogether. In every case this is due to the failure to recognize that God is exalted in holiness, that there is none like Him, and that He is to be loved supremely and worshipped exclusively. Sin dishonors the holiness of God, and thus His wrath is kindled with eternal fury to those who commit any sin against His eternal, holy glory. It is this day of holy exaltation for which we are commanded to pray, *“Hallowed be thy name.”* (*Matthew 6:9*). It is His holy exaltation that the saints and all creation will worship when His kingdom shall be seen in glory (*Psalm 96:9-13*). And we see that His holiness is the cause for the saints’ exaltation at the end of the age: *“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”* (*Revelation 15:4*)

What is amazing about the holiness of God is that He is forgiving and just in doing so. While the idea of God in the minds of many means that God forgives regardless, the reality is as we have seen above, that God’s holiness shall always be honored and vindicated. Yet God does forgive, and this is a part of His holiness. *“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, And passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, Because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to*

Abraham, Which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.” (Micah 7:18–20) Note that there is no god like unto the LORD who, although wroth, will yet forgive, relinquish His anger, and show mercy, while upholding truth. That is what the cross of Christ is about: it is about God being just while justifying sinners (*Romans 3:21-28*). God is consistent with truth and righteousness when He forgives sinners, because He punishes our sin in Christ our representative, who suffered in our place. It is then that God can righteously forgive the sins of those who believe on Jesus. This is why John would say, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)* God’s holiness is seen in His wisdom as revealed in the gospel, as He justly punishes sin while forgiving the repenting and believing sinner. There is none other who can do this! Thanks be unto God for His holy pardon!

Worship is due to God’s holiness. David called men to worship saying, *“Glory ye in his holy name: Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.” (1 Chronicles 16:10)* *“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: Bring an offering, and come before him: Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” (1 Chronicles 16:29)* *“And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, And gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, That we may give thanks to thy holy name, And glory in thy praise.” (1 Chronicles 16:35)* It is the holiness of God that is the cause of the saints’ rejoicing. We are told, *“Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” (Psalm 30:4–5)* The One holy God is gracious and full of life giving favor. Though trials, hardships, and weeping may come, yet our holy God will bring joy in due time by His grace (See also *1 Peter 5:8-10*). While many may have slight reason upon Earth to rejoice, the saints have an eternity of reasons to rejoice, because God our Savior is holy!

Scripture-

Genesis 2:3 sanctifying the seventh day *cf Exodus 31:15; Leviticus 23:3*

Exodus 13:1-2 sanctifying the firstborn *cf* taking Levites instead, and how Levites were set apart to the LORD.

**Exodus 19:5-6* The holiness of Israel as a peculiar people. *Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:19; 28:9*

Exodus 26:33 the holy place and most holy place were separated from the people in general. To enter in, the priests had to be separated unto God. *Exodus 28:3*

Exodus 15:11 "Who is like unto thee..?" *Isaiah 40:25; 46:5, 9-11; 54:5; 57:15; Habakkuk 3:3* (The LORD demonstrates His holiness by His glory covering the heavens. Far from being a localized god, He is Lord of Heaven and Earth.)

Joshua 24:19 God is holy- unlike all other gods *cf Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9 cf Revelation 3:7; 4:8-11 (Jeremiah 10:1-16) Revelation 15:4;*

1 Samuel 2:2 none holy as the LORD

1 Samuel 6:20 unapproachable holiness- compare to the holiest of all and the ark

Psalms 111:9 cf Exodus 3:13-15; 42:8 The holy name of God *cf Acts 4:12; James 2:5 cf Hebrews 7:26, 28*

Psalms 145:17 holy in all His works

Habakkuk 1:12

John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:17-21 God's Word is holy. *2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 2:21*

Leviticus 10:1-3 The LORD will be recognized as holy. That is also to be our prayer *Matthew 6:9*. Cf *Numbers 20:12-13; Deuteronomy 32:51; Isaiah 5:16; 8:13; 42:8; Ezekiel 28:25 (36:22 cf 1 John 2:12)*

Ezekiel 38:23; 39:7, 25;

1 Chronicles 16:10, 29, 35 Holiness of God and worship *Psalms 30:4-6; 97:12*

Nehemiah 8:10-11 holiness and joy *Psalms 33:21; 97:12; 105:3*

**Leviticus 11:44-45* in context *Leviticus 19:2; 20:7* *Numbers 15:40*

Numbers 16:3, 5 different spheres of holiness in service

2 Chronicles 30:27 heaven is God's holy dwelling place. *Psalms 2:7; 3:4; 11:4; 15:1; 20:6; 24:3; 46:4; 47:8*