

Gospel and Holiness of God — 1

(Overview)

Outline

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1. Holiness of God

The Old Testament Hebrew word for holy is “qadash”, and the New Testament Greek word for holy is “hagias”. The primary meaning of both these words is “cut and separate”. God is cut above and separated far above and beyond anything in creation, including man, whom He created in His image. Often, we think of God’s holiness as His purity and separation from sin. His holiness includes His purity but also much more. God’s holiness is not to be regarded as one of His virtues or qualities (attributes) listed along with His many other virtues like mercy, love, wisdom, faithfulness, spirit, etc. But, His holiness is the crown of all God’s infinite perfection and glory. So, His mercy is holy mercy; His love is holy love. His wisdom is holy wisdom; His spirit is Holy Spirit. The Bible says, “His Name is holy” (Isa 57:15, Luke 1:49). None is comparable to Him. No one exists in His category. We may have a list of holy people or even holy angels whom we respect. God is not on that list because He is far above and beyond the list of people, angels, or any created being. No one exists in His category.

Ex 15:11 Who is like you — majestic in holiness,

Sam 2:2 “There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you;

Ps 111:9 Holy and awesome is his name.

Every revelation of God is a revelation of His holiness. Of course! Because God is entirely and essentially holy, anything and everything that comes from God is holy. His law is holy (Rom 7:12), His judgments are righteous (Gen 18:25). His dwelling place in heaven is holy (Deut 26:15), and every good and perfect gift is from God above (James 1:17-18).

Rom 7:12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy. Gen 18:25 Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Deut 26:15 Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place,

James 1:17-18 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

God can only manifest that which is absolutely holy. The most apparent manifestation of God’s holiness is in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Therefore, no one exists in Jesus’ category. Jesus cannot even be number one on any list of people or angels. He is above and beyond them. Jesus is holy. He is the exact representation of God’s being (Heb 1:3). We are limited in understanding God’s holiness because we are from this world. But the Son of God is from above; only He can make God known to us.

John 8:23 [Jesus said] You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

Heb 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

2. Holiness of Christ

- a. The Birth of Jesus — He is called the Holy One and Son of God.

*Luke 1:35-36 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the **holy one** to be born will be called the Son of God.*

(Contrast with our birth: Ps 51:5 Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me).

- b. The Life of Jesus — He lived without sin in a filthy world

John 8:46 [Jesus challenged the Jews] Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

(Contrast with our life: Prov 20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?)

- c. The Death of Jesus — He offered Himself unblemished to God on our behalf

*Heb 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself **unblemished to God**, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (also 1Peter 1:18-19)*

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

3. Holiness of God and the Gospel

Isa 6:1-4 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴ At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

King Uzziah reigned for 52 years (around 791-740 BC). He was a strong military ruler, and Israel prospered under his reign. Eleven years before he died, he became arrogant. He entered the Temple to burn incense, which God only permitted the priests to do. When Azariah, the high priest and 80 associates confronted King Uzziah, he responded in anger instead of repentance. God judged him by striking him with leprosy. King Uzziah had to live the rest of his life in a separate place, with his son Jotham probably acting as king. (2 Chron 26)

At Uzziah's death (around 740 BC), the prophet Isaiah had a transforming vision of the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne (Isa 6:1-4). The seraphs, fiery angels, worshipped closest to the Lord. Each seraph had six wings. With two, they covered their face, shielding their eyes from the brilliance of the majestic holiness of the Lord. They covered their feet with two wings, submitting to the Lord humbly acknowledging they were creatures. And with two wings, they were flying, hovering around the Lord, declaring to each other, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.*"

In English, we could grade any article by calling it (good) (better) or (best). But in Hebrew, they would grade it by calling it, (good), (good, good), (good, good, good). As you can see, an article is best graded in Hebrew when they repeat good thrice. The only place in the Old Testament where we find something graded thrice is the holiness of God. The Bible does not say God is love, love, love or justice, justice, justice. Even though He is. But the Bible emphasises that God is holy, holy, holy. The seraphs worshipped the Lord in the beauty of His holiness, declaring that all glory belongs only to God and not to man or any other creature.

As Isaiah went to worship the Lord in the Temple, he saw the glory of the Lord fill the Temple. Facing God's perfect holiness, every sin is exposed and shown to be utterly sinful. Our hearts drive every part of our body; because our hearts are sinful, we use every aspect of our body for sin. Our sinfulness is most evident by what we speak, for they come from the heart. (*Matt 15:18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'*). In God's eyes, we are all unclean. When Isaiah saw the Lord, high and exalted, he said, "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isa 6:5). Woe means cursed and damned. In chapter 5, Isaiah says "woe" six times to the Israelites because they are sinful. But in chapter 6, Isaiah says "Woe" to himself. Then he adds, "I am ruined." It means he is falling apart and disintegrating. Why? Because, in God's holy presence, every part of his (and our) body has been used for sin. Here is a picture of how a person without Christ would look as they face the holiness of God on judgment day. Frightening but true. It could be even worse. Without Christ, all humanity will face **the wrath of God** because all humanity is sinful.



John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

The Gospel in Isaiah 6:6-7 *Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it, he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."*

The live burning coal from the altar, where sacrifice takes place, represents the purification by blood sacrifice and the fire of the Spirit. The painful cleansing process was necessary before God commissioned Isaiah. Today, the coal represents the cross to cleanse us and the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us.

“But unless we grasp God’s holiness, we will no longer be “amazed” at His amazing grace. When we lose a sense of God’s holiness (as many have), then we lose the realisation that anything is holy or unholy...we also lose a sense of our sinfulness, our need for God’s grace.” (Arthur Lindsey).

The Mission in Isaiah 6:8-13 *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

⁹ He said, “Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “For how long, O Lord?” And he answered: “Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, ¹² until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. ¹³ And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Isa 6:8 The words, “whom shall I send” and “who will go for us”, may not prove the doctrine of the Trinity but strongly implies it (as in Gen 1:26, 11:7). Isaiah, aware of his utter sinfulness and the amazing grace of God, was available with humble readiness for God to send him on any mission without knowing where God will send him— *Here am I. Send me.*

Isa 6:9 God’s message was, ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ God tells Isaiah to give that message to the Israelites, whom He calls “**this people**”. Note, in Chapters 1 to 5, God refers to them only as “**My people**” (1:3, 3:15, 5:13), but subsequently, God also refers to them as “*this or these people*” (6:9,10 8:6,11-12; 28:11-14, 29:13-14) which indicates that the Israelites have hardened their hearts to the extent that they have begun to distance themselves from the Lord.

Isa 6:9-10 Jesus quoted Isa 6:9-10 to explain why He taught in parables (Matt 13:14-15, Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10). It is a principle we must be careful about. Repeated rejection of the message will result in hardness of heart and greater blindness to the truth.

Isa 6:11-13 Isaiah naturally cries, “For how long, Lord?” The Lord replies till Israel is devastated. Nevertheless, there will be a **holy seed, a stump** representing a faithful remnant that will hear and believe, through whose line eventually the Messiah would come and bless the nations of the world.

Isaiah was faithful in a problematic and unrewarding ministry to unresponsive people. But God is faithful to His word. A holy seed remained in Israel through his ministry. God calls us to be faithful in preaching the gospel, and the elect of God will respond as a result. God is faithful.