

GLIMPSES OF GOD – Part 3

The Holiness of God

Open:

- There is one attribute of God seen more often than any other in the Scriptures ... especially the Old Testament.
- √ This dimension of God consumes His very essence and describes who He is and explains why Jesus and the cross are so critical.
- √ When we want to emphasize something, we may choose to use an exclamation point or spell the words with all caps, underline it ... we are saying: listen, this is very important!
- √ No where else do we see raised to the third repetition these words:

Isaiah 6:1-3 NKJV ¹ 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. ² Above it stood seraphim (angel); each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew (he dare not gaze directly at God's glory. Though privileged to serve, he covers his feet acknowledging his lowliness ... with two he flew in service to the ONE on the throne). ³ And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts (Heaven's army); The whole earth is full of His glory!"

- √ The phrase: **Holy, holy, holy** is repeated in the New Testament as well:

- The Apostle John describes a scene that occurs in Heaven around the throne ... angels are present and as in Isaiah, they offer praise to God.

Revelation 4:8-11 NKJV ⁸ The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within (a similar description to Ezekiel's ... keen sense of comprehension, nothing escapes their scrutiny). **And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come! (past, present, future) "**⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast

their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹“You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

- Both times the phrase: **Holy, holy, holy** appears ... once in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament, it is being spoken or sung by heavenly creatures – angels.
 - √ Both times it occurs in the vision of a man (Isaiah the prophet, John the apostle) who was transported to the throne of God.
 - √ Isaiah a prophet and a righteous man is keenly aware of his sinfulness ... he responds: **NKJV** *Woe is me, for I am undone ...* **NLT** *It's over, I'm doomed for I am a sinful man ...*
 - √ Even the angels cover their face and feet showing reverence ... though not guilty of sin, they recognize their own unworthiness in the presence of Almighty God.
 - √ John seems to have a similar experience ... he goes on to describe these creatures as giving glory, honor and reverence to God continually around the throne.
 - √ Interestingly, John's reaction to the vision of God is a little different than Isaiah's.
 - There is no reference to John falling down in terror and awareness of his own sinful state ...
 - This may be because John had already encountered the risen Christ at the beginning of the vision (**Revelation 1:7**).
 - Christ had put His hand on John and told hi not to be afraid.
- **The 3-fold repetition **holy, holy, holy** is called the “trihagion” ... “hagion” meaning holy and “tri,” three. (PP Slide)**
 - √ It was used as an expression of intensity ... to speak with force or passion ... to present a truth about God's character that must not be overlooked.
 - √ The trihagion also expressed the triune nature of God ... meaning three/one. (1 x 1 x 1 = 1)
 - √ Trinity as we call it. **The three persons of the Godhead are equal in holiness and majesty. (PP Slide)**

- The two visions of angels around the throne crying **Holy, holy, holy** clearly indicate that God is the same in both testaments.
 - √ Sometimes people think of the God of the Old Testament as a God of wrath and the God of the New Testament as a God of love.
 - √ But here we see a unified picture of a holy, awesome, majestic God who does not change.
- Admittedly, we often find this attribute as a difficult one to grasp.
 - √ Let's take a stab at defining it:
 - To set apart from all else ... not common or ordinary, different, distinct, unique.
 - Perfect, pure, unspoiled or untainted by sin/evil ... clean.
 - √ God isn't six, ten or one hundred times better than the best person you know ... God is in an entirely different category.
 - There is absolutely no evil in His character; He is totally righteous and deserves our utmost reverence and respect.
 - √ A. W. Tozer: "We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God's power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine."
- May I offer you three R's: Recognize, Respond and Reflect.

(1) Recognize God's holiness. (PP Slide)

- Moses encountered God up close and personal.

Exodus 3:2-5 NLT ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. ³ "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." ⁴ When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush,

“Moses! Moses!” “Here I am!” Moses replied. ⁵ “Do not come any closer,” the Lord warned. “Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.

→ When in the presence of God, humble yourself and show respect.

√ Remember how the Lord revealed Himself at Mt. Sinai:

Exodus 19 God would speak so the people could hear Him but not see Him ... they were given 3 days to prepare ... a boundary around the mountain was to be marked off ... no one was to touch or cross it ...

Vs. 16-21 NLT ¹⁶ On the morning of the third day, thunder roared and lightning flashed, and a dense cloud came down on the mountain. There was a long, loud blast from a ram’s horn, and all the people trembled. ¹⁷ Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a brick kiln, and the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹ As the blast of the ram’s horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply. ²⁰ The Lord came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain. ²¹ Then the Lord told Moses, “Go back down and warn the people not to break through the boundaries to see the Lord, or they will die.

– It was on this mountain God would give the Ten Commandments ... instructions for holy living.

➤ God’s holiness is seen in the Tabernacle and later the Temple.

– God dwelt in the Holy of Holies, and only the high priest was allowed entrance.

√ Involved ... ceremonial washings and atonement for his own sin.

√ Enter reverently lest you be consumed by a holy God.

➤ Achan of the Old Testament learned the hard way about the holiness of God ... blatant disobedience ... stealing what was God’s (Jericho’s spoil, the first battle belonged to the Lord). All of Israel tasted of God’s wrath Losing the next smaller battle at Ai.

– In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira, thought they could lie to God and get by ... before the sun set they both were in the ground.

➤ God's instructions for living say something about His holiness ... the laws of the Old Testament to the Jews, the book of Leviticus was intended to set the Jew apart from the corruption of their day.

– In the New Testament we are given instructions for moral purity, yet our culture mocks and ridicules it.

* This concept of the holiness of God bears out ... there is a great chasm (gap) between God and the sinner.

(2) Realize the need for God's holiness. (PP Slide)

– Illust.: Just as it is impossible to walk on the moon like we are ... we need a moon suit with oxygen ... we cannot enter Heaven or into God's presence because of sin.

– Sin is the obstacle that comes between us and God.

✓ Sin makes access to God impossible.

✓ The answer to our problem is the cross. What God's holiness demanded, love provided.

✓ Jesus met the holy standard of God and then provided the payment for our sin.

✓ If we trust Christ's work on the cross, our sins are deleted (forgiven) and we are given the holiness of Christ.

* As believers, there are three aspects of holiness:

a) Justification

– Understanding God is holy, you acknowledge your sin, put your trust in Christ and receive Him as Savior.

– Your sins are transferred to Jesus (He paid for them) and His righteousness is transferred to you.

→ You have a right standing with God. This is your position in Christ.

* Yet, we still struggle with temptation and certain aspects of holiness – we call this practical holiness.

b) Sanctification

- Having placed your faith in Christ, the Spirit of God comes to live in you.
- Your enemy Satan, your own sinful desires and the pull of the world will attempt to lure you to the dark side.
- The Holy Spirit, the Word of God and other godly believers will help to strengthen you.
- This process of growth is called sanctification.

1 Timothy 4:15-16 NLT ¹⁵ Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

* The permanent aspect of holiness is called:

c) Glorification

- When you die or Jesus returns and you meet Him ... at that moment your holiness will be complete.
- Permanently holy and no more struggle with sin.
- Illust.: Think of it this way: You buy a house, put down a down payment and sign your name ... commitment phase.

√ Whose house is it? Legal documents say it's yours.

√ That's the legal position.

√ The house belongs to you, and you make payments each month to a mortgage company.

- The house is legally yours, but it becomes more and more yours practically.
- This is the process of becoming more like Christ (sanctification).

∴ (No, you can't work your way to Heaven.)

- √ Eventually, you make the final payment and burn the mortgage.
- When we get home in Heaven, we will be glorified.

Close:

* Brings me to the last **R**.

(3) Reflect God's holiness. (PP Slide)

- This isn't a "holier than thou" attitude.
- It's not a set of rules ... it's reflecting one of the chief attributes of the God we love.
- Jesus died to make us holy!

1 Peter 1:14-16 NLT ¹⁴ So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

- Do you show proper respect for who God is?
- Have you allowed Christ to make you holy?
- Are you reflecting the holiness of your Father?

Next Week: The Love of God

Message Notes
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