

## The Gathering Church

Sonia's message 6/14/26

Know God As He Is - Week 1

Reverence Changes Us  
True Reverence Matters  
Make Worship Truthful  
Be Holy Yourself  
Holy in Glory  
I Am Holy  
Repetition Adds Force  
Holy in Conduct  
God Equips Us  
He Sends Us  
Here Am I  
Lord, Send Me

Today we begin a new series, **Knowing God as He Is**. Over the next eight weeks, we will consider seven attributes that reveal who God is in his very being. In theology, an attribute is not merely something God *does*, but something true of *God Himself*. His attributes are the absolute perfections of *His nature*.

This matters because we cannot worship God rightly if we think of him wrongly. We may speak of God's works—what he does in creation, providence, judgment, and grace—but his attributes speak of who he is. **And all that God does flows from all that God is.**

In this series we will reflect on God's holiness, omnipresence, love, wisdom, justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are not isolated ideas, but **interwoven perfections** of the one true God. **To ignore one is to distort the whole, because God is never divided against Himself.**

In human relationships, the more deeply we know a person, the more clearly we recognize what is true of them and what is not. I knew my mother Lorna as kind, gentle, supportive, nurturing, and funny; I know my spiritual sister Sheran is contemplative, loyal, slow to criticize, and quick to give a word of support and encouragement; and I know my husband Javan is introverted and quietly loyal, wordlessly helping others under the radar, going above and beyond for family. I know things about them because of the time I spent with them over many years. **I would recognize an untruth if spoken against them.**

In a far greater way, the more we know God through His Word the Son, by His Spirit, and his written words of Scripture, the less willing we are to accept distorted ideas about Him. We learn to love what is true, reject what is false, and rest in what He has revealed of Himself.

Theologians often speak of two broad categories of divine attributes. Some are **incommunicable**—perfections that belong to God alone, such as His eternity, omnipotence, and immutability. Others are **communicable**—perfections His image-bearers reflect in measure like creatures, such as love, justice, mercy, and goodness. **Yet all of God's attributes are inseparable.** **If we deny or diminish one, we do not merely lose a detail; we distort our vision of God Himself.**

Years ago I read a book by an author who denied the existence of hell, because "God is good." And my friend Andrew and I argued years ago for several hours because he believed that all humans ever born would be saved. One person accepted God's goodness, while dismissing His **Holiness which demands separation from evil**, and the other accepted God's grace, while discarding His Sovereign right to judge his creation.

A. W. Tozer wrote in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” That is why this series matters. Our aim is to acknowledge, understand, and believe what God has made Himself known, so that our theology is true, our worship is reverent, and our lives are transformed.

## God Is Holy — Why Reverence Changes Us

God’s holiness is not merely one divine attribute among many; it is the blazing beauty of all that He is. To behold His holiness is to be brought low in reverence, made honest about sin, and made ready to receive His grace. In Isaiah 6 and 1 Peter 1, we are summoned to see the Lord as He truly is and, in seeing Him rightly, to be changed.

Key texts:

Isaiah 6:1–8: <sup>1</sup> In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. <sup>2</sup> Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called out to another and said,

Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

<sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. <sup>5</sup> Then I said,

“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. <sup>7</sup> He touched my mouth with it and said,

“Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

God’s holiness is the radiant perfection of His being—His utter otherness, moral purity, and glory. When we consider His holiness, we will be humbled by our sin and drawn to His saving grace.

- The holiness of God sets Him apart from all creation.
- The cry of heaven declares: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.”
- The holiness of God exposes the sinfulness of man.
- The grace of God cleanses and commissions His people.

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord. That opening phrase matters because it places this vision in a moment of national instability and personal upheaval. Uzziah had reigned for decades. His death meant the end of an era, and Judah would have felt the uncertainty of what came next. Yet at the very moment an earthly throne was shaken, **Isaiah was shown a throne that could not be shaken.** **The contrast is intentional: one king dies, but the true King reigns forever.** Isaiah 6 presents God's holiness in the setting of Judah's crisis, highlighting the contrast between a mortal king and the eternal Lord on the throne.

That is where many people are living right now. Something they relied on has shifted. A diagnosis changes the outlook. A job ends unexpectedly. A family burden weighs heavily. A season closes, and the future feels uncertain. It is **in those moments that we most need a right vision of God.** Not a God reduced to our preferences, and not a God we treat casually, but the God Scripture reveals as holy.

God's holiness reveals His utter uniqueness, moral perfection, and glory. And when we truly see His holiness, we become aware of our sin and our need for grace. Tozer's comment that **"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us"** fits Isaiah 6 beautifully, *because a right vision of God changes how we see ourselves, how we worship, and how we respond to His call.* **When we treat sacred things casually there is a price to be paid.**

The Ark of the Covenant was handled inappropriately. God had given a prescribed method for handling the Ark of the Covenant: **The Prescribed Method** in the Book of Exodus dictated that the Ark must be fitted with gold rings and carried by poles made of acacia wood. *Only consecrated Levites from the family of Kohath* were permitted to transport the Ark. They were **expressly forbidden from touching** the Ark itself, lest they die. So when King David's men transported it *on an oxcart* instead of having the Levites carry it on their shoulders using poles, and the oxen stumbled, Uzzah reached out to steady the sacred chest and was struck dead by God. (2 Samuel 6)

Earlier, after the Philistines returned the captured Ark to Israel, the local men of the town of Beth-shemesh inappropriately opened and peered inside it. Because they **irreverently** looked into the most holy object, God struck down seventy men of the town. (1 Sam. 6)

Aaron's two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, died because **they offered "unauthorized" or "strange" fire to God** in their incense burners, which was against the specific commands given for the Tabernacle. As a consequence, a fire emerged from the Lord and consumed them instantly. Rather than using the holy fire mandated by God for the altar, they brought their own unauthorized fire and incense. Moses explained that **God was protecting the sanctity and holiness of his presence**, stating, "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified." (Leviticus 10:1-3).

In all these reflections, we see **disobedience, irreverence, and unauthorized offerings.** Isaiah 6 calls the church even today, to look up again, **to be awed by God's holiness**, and to be aware that God protects his holiness from unholy hearts and actions.

## 1. God's holiness sets Him apart from all creation

Verse 1 of Isaiah 6 says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple." That language is meant to slow us down. Isaiah does not begin with himself. **He begins with God.** The Lord is seated, not pacing in anxiety, not reacting to events, but reigning. He is high and lifted up, **exalted above every power and every rival.** The train of His robe fills the temple, a picture of majesty so immense that the place of worship can hardly contain the symbolism of His glory. **God's holiness means He is set apart from all creation,** separate in His being, flawless in His character, and unmatched in His glory. Isaiah 6 follows a classic prophetic call pattern of divine encounter, recognition of unworthiness, cleansing, and commission.

God is Creator, and we are the creatures. He is pure light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5) This is why **reverence matters.** Reverence is not stiff religion. **It is the right response to reality.** When we see God as He is, our speech changes, our posture changes, our worship changes, and our priorities change.

The language of holiness in Scripture carries the idea of being set apart, distinct, unlike anything else. God is holy in His being. There is no one like Him. **He is not the best version of creation; He is the Creator over all creation.** He is holy in His character. There is no stain in Him, no compromise, no darkness, no injustice, no corruption. **He is holy in His glory.** Everything about Him is beautiful, pure, blazing, and worthy of worship. That is why reverence matters. **Reverence is not cold formality.** It is the fitting response of the creature before the Creator, of the sinner before the sinless One, of the redeemed before the God of grace. **The repeated cry of "holy" in Isaiah's vision emphasizes God's absolute perfection and otherness.**

## 2. "Holy, Holy, Holy" is the Lord God Almighty

Verses 2 and 3 of Isaiah 6 introduce the seraphim. These heavenly beings stand above the throne, each with six wings. With two they cover their faces, with two they cover their feet, and with two they fly. **Even in sinless service they do not behave casually in the presence of God.** They veil themselves before the blazing holiness of the Lord. Then they cry to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." In Hebrew expression, **repetition adds force.** To say "holy" three times is to emphasize the fullness, perfection, and immeasurable greatness of God's holiness. The heavenly hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy", highlights God's utter worthiness and the overflowing glory of His reign.

Notice that the text does not say the whole temple is full of His glory, but *the whole earth*. God's holiness is not confined to one room, one service, or one moment. **His glory spills over all creation.** The thresholds shake, the house fills with smoke, and **everything in the scene announces that Isaiah is in the presence of the living God.**

**When a courtroom judge enters, people rise, not because the judge is divine, but because the office carries weight.** How much more should we the people of God come before the Lord with humble attention and reverence. This text says **worship is not mainly about what we prefer but about who God is.** Reverence does not make worship lifeless; it **makes worship truthful.**

### 3. His holiness exposes our sinfulness

Then verse Isa 6:5 **turns the spotlight from the throne to the prophet's heart**. Isaiah says, "Woe is me! For I am undone." Earlier, Isaiah pronounced woes on sin in the nation. Now the woe lands on *himself*. **That is what happens when the holiness of God is no longer a doctrine we admire from a distance but a reality we encounter.** Isaiah *confesses* that he is a man of unclean lips and that he lives among a people of unclean lips. **Why lips? Because the mouth reveals the heart.** The prophet recognizes that even his speech is touched by impurity. **In the presence of God's holiness, self-congratulation dies and honest confession begins.**

Peter makes the same move in 1 Peter 1:15–16 when he says, "but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, **"You shall be holy, for I am holy."**

In context, he tells us believers, as obedient children, not to be conformed to former desires, but to **be holy in all our conduct because the One who called them us holy.** Peter places holiness in the everyday shape of life: conduct, habits, choices, reactions, speech, relationships. The call is not to act religious for an hour, but to live set apart in every sphere, grounded in the character of the God who called His people. A mirror can tell you that your face is dirty, but it cannot wash you. In the same way, God's holiness reveals our sin, but it also drives us to the place where cleansing can be found. That is why **conviction is a gift.** It is painful, but it is merciful, because it brings us into the truth.

### 4. His holy grace cleanses and commissions His people

In verses Isa:6 and 7, one of the seraphim flies to Isaiah with a live coal taken from the altar and touches his mouth. The altar is significant because it is associated with sacrifice and atonement. God does not deny Isaiah's sin, and He does not dismiss it. He deals with it. **"Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."** The same holiness that exposes sin also provides the means of cleansing. **This is where the gospel shines.** For Isaiah, the burning coal came from the altar. **For us, cleansing comes through the finished work of Jesus Christ, our substitute and Savior.** He bore sin, satisfied justice, and opened the way for guilty people to be forgiven and made new.

Then in verse 8, **after cleansing comes calling.** Isaiah hears the Lord say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and he answers, "Here am I! Send me." **Notice the order carefully: vision, confession, cleansing, commission. God does not send Isaiah before He cleanses him.** Grace comes before mission. After Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in John 13, he declared to them in John 15:3, *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."* That statement was an encouraging declaration of spiritual purity and preparation for fruitfulness. God prepares His servants by grace for the work He calls them to do. The God who forgives also sends. **The grace that cleanses also commissions.**

### Conclusion

So how should we respond? **We must recover reverence, practice honest confession, and pursue holiness in all of life.** Isaiah 6 reminds us that we come before the Lord of hosts, not a

casual idea of God shaped by our preferences. And 1 Peter reminds us that the Holy One who called us now calls us to be holy in all our conduct.

**This is why our view of God matters so much.** Low thoughts of God produce shallow worship, but a biblical vision of His holiness leads to reverence, repentance, and obedience.

And here is our hope: **holiness is not only God's command; it is also His promise.** In Christ, we are already set apart as God's people, and one day we will fully share in the glory He has prepared for His children. What God has begun, He will complete. **We are sanctified now, and we shall be like Him when He appears (1 Corin. 1:2; 1 John 3:2).**

That is the difference between status and inheritance: by grace, we already belong to the family of God; in glory, we will fully enjoy all the Father has prepared for us in Christ. **We belong to Him now, and we will be like Him then.**

Church, **the answer to casual Christianity is not more noise but a clearer sight of God.** We need to see the Lord high and lifted up, confess our sin without excuse, receive His grace with gratitude, and answer His call with willing hearts. Like a child brought at last into a loving family, **we are not on probation with God—we belong to Him.** And because we belong to Him, we may live in reverence now and in hope of the day when we will fully share in His holiness and glory. **So let us say, with humble joy, "Here am I, Lord. Send me." Amen.**