

THE NATURE OF GOD

(Isaiah 6:1-3)

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.

There is none holy as the LORD (1 Samuel 2:2). He is holy, holy, holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). There is no greater recognition or words known to human tongue that can be offered in praise to God that magnifies His person and, if it could be said, His loftiest attribute other than: "...Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts..."

- Nowhere in Scripture is the Lord thrice praised for a specific attribute, save one—His holiness. He is not partially holy; nor is He temporarily holy; neither is He holy, holy; He is altogether holy, holy, holy. As the children of Israel declared in their song of victory:

“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)

Acknowledging, focusing on, and understanding this truth concerning the holiness of God, is of necessity in order to progress in our spiritual growth; for, He’s is the very image into which we are to be conformed. Concerning the holiness of God, Aiden Wilson Tozer said:

“God is not now any holier than He ever was. For He, being unchanging and unchangeable, can never become holier than He is. And He never was holier than He is, and He’ll never be any holier than now. His moral excellence implies self-existence, for He did not get His holiness from anyone nor from anywhere. He did not go off into some vast, infinitely distant realm and there absorb His holiness; He is Himself the Holiness. He is the All-Holy, the Holy One; He is holiness itself, beyond the power of thought to grasp or of word to express, beyond the power of all praise.”ⁱ

God is high and lifted up. He is exalted above all. There is none like Him. He is separate from all things for His holiness demands it. He cannot tolerate imperfection for it will reduce the glory of His dwelling place. He is, and was, and forever will be holy, holy, holy; All that will come into His presence must be of like character—holy.

God's holiness is His defining characteristic as mentioned in the previous lesson. The holiness of God is a term used in the Bible to describe both His person and His power. His supremacy and His splendour. It is completely unique and unblemished by definition and by demonstration.

- Because He's very nature is Holy then all that He is and all that He does is in accordance with Holiness and never contrary to it.
- Close proximity to the manifest holiness of God was a dangerous endeavour if not approached God's way. Yet any who subjected themselves to God, were required to be obedient to the instructions for holiness.

THE ANALOGY OF THE SUN

Take the sun in our solar system as an example. It is said that the current estimated distance between the sun and planet earth is approximately 148.29 million kms (said to fluctuate between 147-151 million kms depending on located on the earth's orbit). The current circumference of the earth is said to be approximately 40, 075kms. If you do about 3,700 laps around the earth, that's the approximate distance from the sun to earth. Yet at such a distance the sun shines so bright and powerfully that the energy it gives radiates throughout the entire solar system and affects even us.

It's a good, needful thing to be exposed to the sun. But even at this distance, too much exposure to the sun is said to be harmful; let alone if we were to get closer to the sun. However, there are certain things we can apply and wear that would allow us to stay under the exposure of the sun for a longer period of time and even if it is at a closer proximity.

In like manner, the bible has recorded examples and instructions of mortal men approaching the presence of the almighty God, in such a way that is illustrated by the analogy of the sun.

Example 1 - Moses and the Burning Bush.

Exo 3:5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

- This is a portion of Scripture that is commonly referred to as demonstration of the manifest presence of God. Moses marvelled at the fact that the tree was on fire but was not being consumed, so he assayed to draw closer until the LORD spoke and instructed him to put off his shoes, because where he was standing was holy ground (Acts 7:30-33).
- The LORD by His presence had sanctified the ground where He was revealed. Therefore, it was to be approached and accessed as God instructed.
- "It was common practice for priests to enter temples barefoot to prevent bringing in dust or impurities of any sort.ⁱⁱ"

Example 2 – Joshua and the Captain of the host of the LORD

Jos 5:14 And he said, Nay; but *as* captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? **Jos 5:15** And the captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, **Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.** And Joshua did so.

- Like Moses, Joshua was also to take off his shoes because the area where he stood was made holy.

Example 3 – The LORD on Mount Sinai

Exo 19:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. **Exo 19:22** And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

(Also see Exodus 19:10-13)

- Not anyone could approach and those who could were to be sanctified or cleansed and made pure and remain pure from any uncleanness.

Example 4 – The Holy of Holies

The phrase “Holy of Holies” is not found in the Scriptures. The reason why it is commonly known as the Holy of Holies is because of the name it is given in Exodus concerning the Tabernacle and in 2 Chronicles concerning the Temple.

Exo 26:34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the **most holy place**.

2Ch 5:7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the **most holy place**, *even* under the wings of the cherubims:

- The phrase here ‘most holy’ is literally ‘holy holy’. This is where it was understood that the presence of God was.
- Only the High Priest alone, once a year, was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:7). Those especially that were in closest proximity to God and representatives of God had to take greater care in order to keep themselves pure in order to be within proximity of the presence of God in the service of God.

Example 5: The Seraphims

Considering the display of the Seraphims in the presence of God. The most majestic creatures ever created that forever abide in the presence of the most Holy bear a sense of unworthiness that force them to veil themselves, even their faces, before His majestic throne and perfect holiness. Created with 6 wings that are necessary for their habitation.

- They cease not to declare their praise and worship of holy, holy, holy. This is not a reckless, vain, repetitious chant, but rather one of complete awareness whose tongues and hearts are arrested by the glory of the holiness of God and cannot express their admiration with any other words known to man.
- There is perhaps a heavenly language that finite man will never be able to comprehend this side of eternity, but God has always revealed His Word and communicated with man in the language that man understands. Holy, holy, holy is perhaps the mortal interpretation given by the heavenly vision; for it is possible, that there are no words so majestic and wonderful so as to be able to explain the grand splendour and brightness of God. Yet this communicable attribute of God captivated these perfect creatures, and it ought also to captivate all men, especially the child of God.

Matthew Henry comments on the Seraphims. He writes:

“Special notice is taken of their wings (and of no other part of their appearance), because of the use they made of them, which is designed for instruction to us. They had *each of them six wings*...Four were made use of for a covering...with the two upper wings, next to the head, they covered their faces, and with the two lowest wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This bespeaks their great humility and reverence in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in *the assembly of those saints*, Psa 89:7. ... If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne!”ⁱⁱⁱ

Example 6: The Lord Jesus Christ

- The exclusivity of Salvation in Christ alone. No other sacrifice (Heb 10:12), no other way (John 14:6); no other name (Acts 4:12) whereby way can be saved.
- He is the satisfaction of God’s perfect holiness poured out in judgment for sin (2 Cor. 5:21). He drank “the cup” (Matt 26:39) and was forsaken for us (Matt. 27:46).

The examples are simply to signify that the presence of God’s holiness was to be approached according to God’s instruction lest it have fatal affect rather than a sanctifying affect.

THE GODHEAD

(Colossians 2:9)

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Perfect harmony and perfect unity in the Godhead. By Godhead, the bible teaches in 1 John 5:7 “For there are **three** that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and **these three are one.**”

- The Scriptures are not teaching three different manifestations of God, but rather three persons of the Godhead that are one, and according to Colossians 2:9, in the man Christ Jesus, “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Great indeed is “the mystery of godliness: **God** was manifest in the flesh...:” (1 Timothy 3:16)
- There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:5) and the Scriptures present the Father to be God (Romans 1:7), the Son to be God (Hebrews 1:8), and the Holy Spirit to be God (Acts 5:3,4).
- The Scriptures also personally attribute the Father to be holy (John 17:11), the Son to be holy (Mark 1:24; Revelation 4:8), and as His name declares Him to be, the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 7:39). He is a thrice holy Godhead.

In connection with the vision that Isaiah had in Chapter 6, the New Testament reveals in a more specific way Who it was that He saw.

- In John’s gospel, there appears to be a connection making reference back to Isaiah 6. It says in John 12:41 “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” Many believe that what Isaiah saw was not a “Theophany” but a “Christophany”.
- The description given in John’s record in the book of Revelation gives more detail.
Rev 4:8 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.

It was no doubt a vision of God, but more specifically telling of Messiah the King (Isa. 6:5) “which was, and is, and is to come.”

Andrew Murray comments:

“[T]he mystery of the Trinity is the mystery of Holiness: the Glory and the Power of the Trinity is the Glory and Power of God who makes us holy. There is God dwelling in light inaccessibly, a consuming fire of Holy Love, destroying all that resists, glorifying into its own purity all that yields. There is the Son, casting Himself into that consuming fire, whether in its eternal blessedness in heaven, or its angry wrath on earth, a willing sacrifice, to be its food and its satisfaction, as well as the revelation of its power to destroy and to save. And there is the Spirit of Holiness, the flames of that mighty fire spreading on every side, convicting and judging as the Spirit of Burning, and then transforming into its own brightness and holiness all that it can reach. All the relations of the Three Persons to each other and to us have their root and their meaning in the revelation of God as the Holy One. As we know and partake of Him, we shall know and partake of Holiness.”^{iv}

DESCRIBING GOD’S HOLINESS AND AFFECTS

1. GOD HATES SIN

Isaiah 6:5 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.

Considering the response of Isaiah and his response to his heavenly vision, we are shown God’s perfect abhorrence of sin. Isaiah needed to be cleansed (v7) having seen his corruptness as it really is in light of a holy God. As recorded in Habakkuk 1:13, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.”

- The idea of attributing God as the author of sin is utter foolishness and an attack on the holy character of God.
- He cannot bear the sight of sin and therefore must it be judged. In his holy detestation of sin, which begun with the devil and his angels, He created an everlasting hell (Matthew 25:41) separated from God for all eternity (2 Thessalonians 1:9).
- Herein is the enormity of the love of God that is offered to all men. The judgment and condemnation for sin was poured out on the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary that all men might receive complete forgiveness of sin and be reconciled to God, having then the sure hope of eternal life; but not all have or will receive Him.
- God did not simply pardon sin—He judged it. Sin must always be thoroughly dealt with when it arises lest it comes back to bite when least expected.

2. GOD IS LIGHT

1 John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

The light of God is distinctly unique (holy). Even in the brightness of the desert sun, the light from the fire upon the bush asserted itself and caught the attention of Moses. The “light” of God that was in Daniel was noised abroad and undeniably superior to any other (Daniel 5:14).

The contrast to light is darkness, and there is a serious and obvious difference between the two. Both light and darkness cannot prevail in the same area. The light of God is manifest in different forms and with varying intensity. The Scriptures speak of the Light of God:

- in Himself (Psalm 27:1; 1 John 1:5),
- in His Word (Psalm 119:103,130; 2 Peter 1:19),
- in His law (Proverbs 6:23),
- in Christ (John 1:1-9; 8:12; 9:5),
- in His children (Isaiah 2:5; Matthew 5:14-16; Ephesians 5:8),
- in the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:10),
- in salvation (1 Peter 2:9).

The purpose of the light is to differentiate good and evil (John 3:19-21); them that are God’s and them that are not (2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8). The light of God takes different forms, yet hath the same affect.

- When applied to the unregenerate, the light of God first brings conviction of sin (Romans 3:20; 5:13; 1 Corinthians 15:56) unto salvation in Christ Jesus (Psalm 19:7; Galatians 3:24).
- Regarding His children, the light of God always leads in truth (Psalm 43:3; John 3:21) and righteousness (Isaiah 42:6; 2 Corinthians 6:14) unto holiness (Romans 6:19,22; 1 Thessalonians 4:7).

If the light of God were to shine upon man in greater intensity, no man would be able to stand it. When the Lord appeared unto Paul on the road to Damascus as a “great light,” Paul was left blinded for three days because of the “glory of that light” (Acts 9:8,9; 22:11)! No man can gaze directly upon the created sun for a length of time without causing damage to their eyes; how much more if men’s eyes laid hold upon the one whom created that sun! The light of God will definitely have an affect on us to say the least.

3. GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

Deuteronomy 4:24 For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.

Hebrews 12:29 For our God *is* a consuming fire.

“In the strictness of his justice, and purity of his holiness”^v (John Wesley). Like the sun, fire can be helpful and harmful. This description takes us back to the description in Isaiah 6:4 that “the house was filled with smoke.” Compared with Exodus 19:18 when God descended upon Mt. Sinai, the bible says: “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” It is symbolic of His justice and purity of His holiness. The fire determines both what is acceptable and unacceptable.

- When the LORD judged Nadab and Abihu:
Lev 10:2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

- When Jesus returns in His Second Coming the bible says:
Psa 50:3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- The Bible describes His Word as being like fire:
Jer 23:29 *Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?

- In the vision that John saw:
Rev 1:14 His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;

- When believers will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ:
1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

God being a consuming fire and characterized by fire is in relation to His perfect Holiness as it applies to His justice and judgment. Signifying His approval and disapproval. In light of this fact, the prior verse in Hebrews uses it as a motivating factor to exhort us to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:” (Hebrews 12:28).

4. GOD IS GOOD

Psalm 119:68 Thou *art* good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

(Psalm 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1)

All that God is and all that God does is good. As obvious as that may seem that poses a problem for sinful man. The problem is that God is in essentially good and we are not. All that God does is good and all the good that we attempt to do in and of ourselves counts nothing more than a “filthy rag” (Isaiah 64:4).

- When God does anything it is always good because He is good. We see this in its earliest form in the record we have of creation (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31)
- God is even able and only able to take any situation and use it for good in bringing us more into His image. (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28,29)
- Outside of Christ the bible says that there is none good” and in actual fact, everything done outside of Christ is classed not only a “filthy rag” but they are also referred to as “dead works” (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14).
- This is why salvation is: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...” (Titus 3:5)

CONCLUSION

To reiterate, we have been called to be holy on the basis that God is holy. Having considered just a glimpse of His Display of Holiness and Demonstration of Holiness in the examples, and looking at further Description of His Holiness, we are to pattern every area of our life in harmony with His Holiness. As God in every area is Holy, so we are to be Holy as He is Holy.

In reflecting on the Holy nature of God, we are with this understanding, pursue holiness in seeking to reflect Him Who has called us to be holy as good Ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

ⁱ <http://stevenjcamp.blogspot.com.au/2008/01/holiness-of-god-by-aw-tozer.html>. 10/10/2016, 4:59P.M.

ⁱⁱ Meyers, Rick. "e-Sword," version 11.0.6; USA; www.e-sword.net. "IVP Bible Background Commentary." Exodus 3:5.

ⁱⁱⁱ Meyers, Rick. "e-Sword," version 11.0.6; USA; www.e-sword.net. "Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible;" Isaiah 6:1-3

^{iv} <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/the-trinity>— [Andrew Murray](#), [Holy in Christ](#); 11/10/13; 1143A.M.

^v Meyers, Rick. "e-Sword," version 11.0.6; USA; www.e-sword.net. "John Wesley's Notes on the Bible." Hebrews 12:29