

JUNE 7, 2020

LESSON 1

# CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

## GOD IS HOLY (ISAIAH 6:3)

### “Holy, Holy, Holy”

When Isaiah was commissioned to become a prophet, he was in the temple. He “saw the Lord sitting upon a throne” (Isa 6:1). During this theophany, angels flew all around God, calling to one another with this song of praise:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isa 6:3).

By describing God in this way, the angels are declaring that God is the holiest person of all. No one can compare to him in terms of holiness, glory, or greatness.

This is a problem for us. In order to stand in the presence of God, we also must be just as holy as he is. In fact, Isaiah realized this as he stood in the presence of God. The prophet was overwhelmed with his own unworthiness in comparison with the greatness and majesty of our “holy, holy, holy” Creator.

### Holiness of God

The moral excellence of God that unifies his attributes and is expressed through his actions, setting him apart from all others.

—Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes*

### Characteristics of God (Sunday Evenings, June–August 2020)

Date	Lesson	Title	Citation
June 7	Lesson 1	God is Holy	Isaiah 6:3
June 14	Lesson 2	God is Love	1 John 4:8
June 21	Lesson 3	God is Angry (Righteously Indignant)	James 1:20; Hebrews 3:10
June 28	Lesson 4	God is Compassionate and Merciful	Exodus 34:6
July 5	Lesson 5	God Does Good	Acts 10:38
July 12	Lesson 6	God is Our Redeemer	
July 19	Lesson 7	The Peace of God	Philippians 4:7
July 26	Lesson 8	The Unity of God	John 17:23
Aug 2	Lesson 9	The Justice of God	Deuteronomy 32:4
Aug 9	Lesson 10	The Humor of God	Matthew 7:3–5
Aug 16	Lesson 11	The Wisdom of God	Colossians 2:3
Aug 23	Lesson 12	The Creativeness of God	2 Corinthians 5:17
Aug 30	Lesson 13	The Covenantal Love of God	Psalms 136

“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isa 6:5).

God cleansed Isaiah of his sin and then commissioned him to become his prophet (Isa 6:6–7).

### The Tabernacle

It wasn’t just his prophets whom God expected to be holy. He demanded this of all his covenant people. When God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, he entered into a covenant relationship with them from atop Mt. Sinai. But before the nation could come into his presence, they had to be consecrated (Ex 19:10–11).

The remainder of Exodus is about the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 25–40). The word “tabernacle” literally means “dwelling.” In other words, the “holy, holy, holy” God wanted to be able to “dwell” among his people. He did this by entering the tabernacle in Ex 40.

In the closing verses of Exodus, God manifested his presence in the form of a cloud. There’s a word that describes this cloud. It’s not in the Bible itself, but Jewish literature calls it the Shekinah (pronounced shuh-KI-nuh). The Hebrew verb *shakan* is used in Ex 40:35 when we’re told that the cloud “settled” on the tabernacle. This is God’s presence.

Let’s jump to the New Testament for a moment. In the Gospel of John, when we’re told that Jesus came and dwelt among us in John 1:14 and that we saw his glory, that verb “dwelt” literally means “tabernacled.” What John is telling us is that, when Jesus came to die on the cross, he was God in the flesh, dwelling among humanity. And Jesus came so that we could dwell with God forever.

### “You Shall Be Holy”

Did you know God doesn’t need a tabernacle today? The church is the tabernacle. God dwells in every one of us who has entered into a covenant relationship with him through the blood of Christ (1 John 4:12).

In the book of Leviticus, God established the sacrificial system by which the people could remain in a covenant relationship with God. This predated and anticipated Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins (cf. Heb 10:1). In Lev 11:44, God demanded this of his covenant people:

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Those words are especially familiar to us because Peter quoted them in 1 Pet 1:16. In this passage, he described us as God’s priests and covenant people. We are called upon to be holy, just as God and Jesus are holy. In fact, without holiness, “no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

“Who is like you among the gods, O LORD—

glorious in **holiness**,

awesome in splendor,  
performing great wonders?

—Ex 15:11

He who is mighty has done great things for me, and **holy** is his name.

—Luke 1:49

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“**Holy, holy, holy**, is the Lord God Almighty!”

—Rev 4:8

