

The Pursuit Of God

Session Two / June 22, 2016

The Attributes Of God

1 An “attribute of God” is anything that is true of Him. For example: God’s holiness,
2 which we will explore tonight.

3
4 (A reminder from last week: *Our concept of God leads to basically every action in our*
5 *lives, the way we act (or react), our speech, our behavior at home, our missiology, our*
6 *thoughts concerning worship and, in general, our lives basically lived. And our concept*
7 *of Him certain formulates our world view.)*

8
9 There are many attributes of God. Last week we discussed several of them:

- 10 ▶ God is Spirit John 4:24 **God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must**
11 **worship him in spirit and in truth.**
- 12 ▶ God is invisible to the human eye. Exodus 33:20 **And he said, Thou canst**
13 **not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. Only one day with**
14 **glorified vision and bodies will we behold Him.**
- 15 ▶ God is alive. Often in scripture we read of “the living God.” Not only is He alive,
16 but He is the source of all life.
- 17 ▶ God is a person. He has intellect (Gen. 18:19); He has sensibility (Genesis 6:6);
18 He has volition - will (John 6:38).

19
20 And there are so many other attributes. But tonight we take up one of His attributes so
21 often neglected:

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

22
23
24
25 1 Peter 1:16 **Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.**

26
27 I will base this aspect of God’s attributes primarily on the sixth chapter of the prophet
28 Isaiah. I used this to some extent last week; but I know of no chapter in Holy Writ that
29 so declares of the holiness of God as does this chapter:

30
31 Isaiah 6:1-9

32 **In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high**
33 **and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. [2] Above it stood the seraphims: each**
34 **one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his**

1 feet, and with twain he did fly. [3] And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy,
2 holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. [4] And the posts of the
3 door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

4 [5] Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips,
5 and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the
6 King, the Lord of hosts. [6] Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live
7 coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: [7] And he
8 laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is
9 taken away, and thy sin purged. [8] Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,
10 Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

11 12 King Uzziah (also called Azariah)

13
14 In the Old Testament (or Hebrew Scriptures as it is also known) we have the story of the
15 nation Israel. Upon the death of King Solomon (931 B.C.) Israel underwent a civil strife
16 that ended with the nation being split - the great part with ten tribes becoming Israel and
17 the southern part with a mere two tribes (with Jerusalem remaining as its capital) became
18 Judah.

19
20 The northern Kingdom lasted from 931 B.C. until 721 B.C. when it was conquered and
21 destroyed by the Assyrians. The southern Kingdom of Judah lasted until 586 B.C. when
22 it was conquered and destroyed by the Babylonians, led by King Nebuchadnezzar.

23
24 In all those years, both kingdoms were led by kings – Israel had 19 of them and Judah had
25 20. That northern kingdom of Israel never had a single, godly king.....not even one!
26 210 years of 19 bad, ungodly monarchies!

27
28 Judah in the south did not fare much better. However, among those 20 kings 7 of them
29 could be considered at least moderately good, with a couple of them being exceptional.
30 Immediately coming to mind would be David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah. But
31 perhaps heading the list in most areas was King Uzziah who reigned in Jerusalem from
32 792 (when he became co-regent with his father Amaziah) until his death in 739 B.C.
33 Give or take a few months, it totaled 52 years.

34
35 For most of those years, Uzziah was an impressive and godly king. During those years,
36 he was guided by ministry of the prophet Zechariah. His leadership on the throne gave
37 Judah realm extension and prosperity it had never enjoyed since the days of King
38 Solomon. Amid all the success crowning the first 20 years of his reign, Uzziah earnestly
39 sought the Lord and endeavored to walk according to divine counsels. *“As long as he
40 sought the Lord, He made him to prosper.”*

1 But Uzziah's life began to unravel with the death of the prophet. Arrogance and pride
2 entered his life. Tragic!

3 *Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?*
4 *Like a fast-falling meteor and a fast-flying cloud.*
5 *A flash of lightning and break of the wave*
6 *He passes from life to rests in his grave.*

7 WILLIAM KNOX - SCOTTISH POET IN 1787
8

9 Pride entered the king's heart - that human sin that is at the bottom of all mistakes.
10 What a pity Uzziah did not remember the proverb of Solomon, Proverbs 11:2 **When**
11 **pride cometh, then cometh shame.** Uzziah dared usurp the ministry of God's priests
12 and attempted to offer incense in the Temple. As he prepared to undertake this priestly
13 office, white spots appeared on his forehead – he was a leper.
14

15 His disease made him unclean to his constituents. From that moment on, Uzziah lived
16 among lepers, an outcast from all social relationships and duties. His fate: 2 Chron.
17 26:10 **Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much**
18 **cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine**
19 **dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.** From the throne
20 to the farm! And then he died.
21

22 ISAIAH'S VISION

23
24 In digging into this scripture recently, I have had a change of mind concerning Isaiah's
25 location. I have always considered that the grand prophet came to Jerusalem for he saw
26 the Lord high and lifted up in the Temple. The Temple was in Jerusalem. But now I
27 believe it was a much loftier Temple than that built by Solomon several hundred years
28 later. I believe God gave this prophet a mighty dream in which like Paul and John
29 centuries later he was taken into the heavenlies.
30

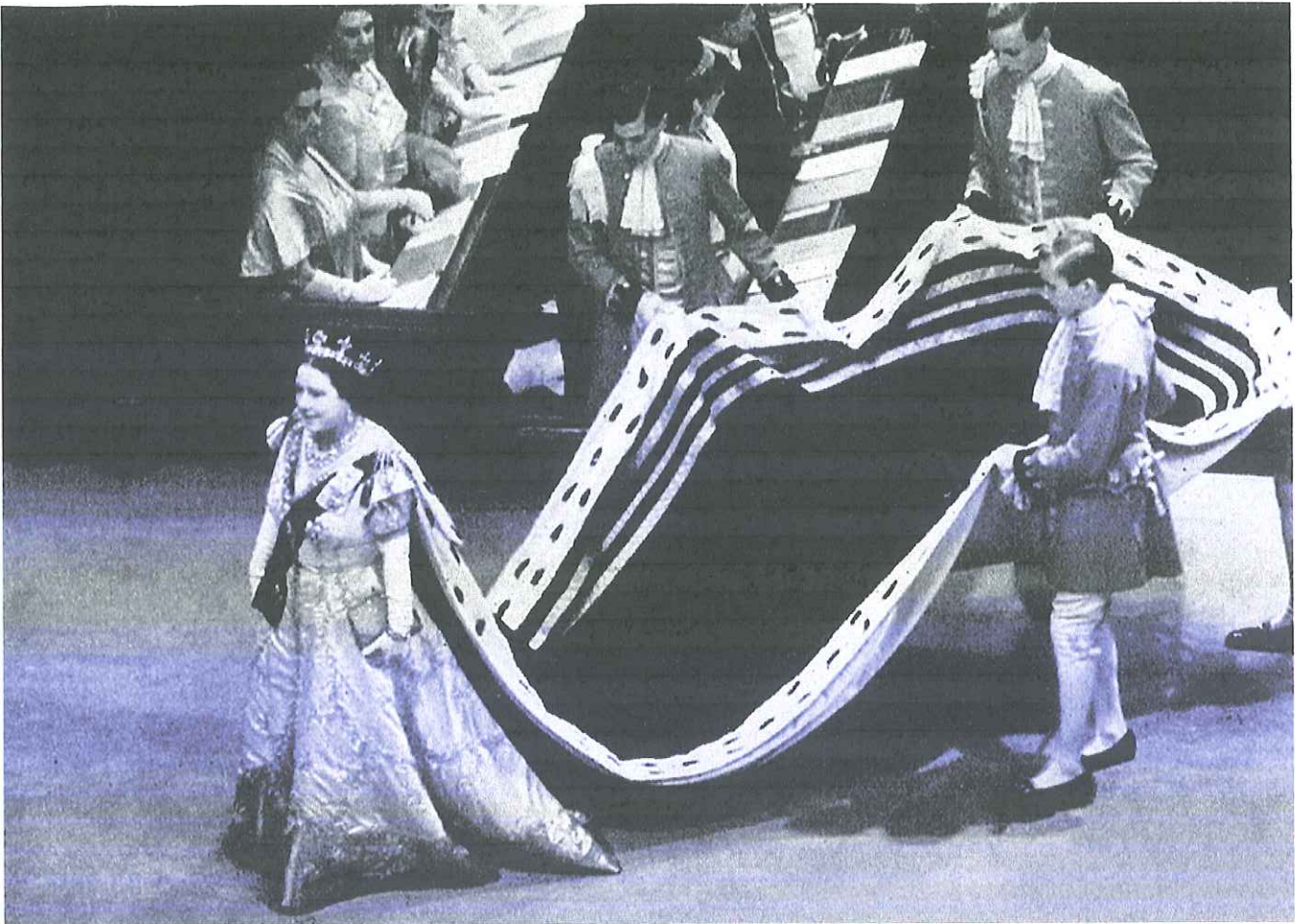
Isaiah 6:1

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.

31 At this point, we are going to be given a divine insight into the holiness of God. It will
32 be a divine encounter.
33

34 Isaiah saw the Lord....sitting upon His throne. Is this not what John saw later in his
35 vision from exile on Patmos? Rev. 4:2-3 **And immediately I was in the spirit: and,**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41



A QUEEN AND HER "TRAIN"

behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. [3] And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Keep in mind that this is a vision - for in his earthly body and with finite eyesight he never could have beheld God face-on. More about that when we come to the seraphim.

“His (God’s) train filled the temple. In the picture above, you see a queen with her royal garment, the train, being held by pages. Impressive, indeed! But Isaiah, writing in terms which he could somehow comprehend, reported that the “train” of the divine apparel of God (if we can say such a thing!) filled THE ENTIRE TEMPLE IN HEAVEN! Can you even imagine such a sight?

How can we mortals somehow get fixed in our mind the enormity, the holiness of God? We have reduced him in our religious “folk lore” to the “man upstairs.” But now Isaiah’s vision gets even more profound:

Isaiah 6:2

Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his

1 **face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.**

2
3 That fabulous Bible expositor from Orlando's Ligonier Ministries, R. C. Sproul, has
4 explained that God creates us all with the physical equipment we need to do His work on
5 earth. The seraphim are an outstanding example of this. Angels have not always
6 existed; they were created: Neh. 9:6 **Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast**
7 **made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host (angels), the earth, and all**
8 **things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all;**
9 **and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.**

10
11 *The seraphim are found in scripture hovering OVER the throne of God. They lead*
12 *heaven in the worship of God Almighty and purify God's servants for acceptable worship*
13 *and service. They are concerned with the revelation of God's holiness. In deep*
14 *humility and profound reverence they carry on their ministry.*

15 LECTURES IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY / THIESSEN / EERDMAN PUBL / PAGE 108

16
17 So notice clearly the fact that they have SIX wings. Isaiah 6:2 **Above it stood the**
18 **seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain (two) he covered his face, and with**
19 **twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.**

20
21 God is so holy that not even these majestic and massive angels can behold Him (nor can
22 mankind until we have eternal, resurrected and glorified bodies after the Rapture). Note
23 Moses' reaction when confronted with the presence of God in the burning bush: Exodus
24 3:6 **And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.** So our Creator
25 God gave the seraphim extra wings so that they could cover their faces in His presence
26 and still fulfill their purpose.

27
28 Note also that with two wings they cover their feet. Why would they do that? Again
29 we refer to Moses at the burning bush. What was God's command to him? Exodus 3:5
30 **And he (God) said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the**
31 **place whereon thou standest is holy ground.**

32
33 Are we beginning to grasp a picture somehow of the holiness and majesty of God? Once
34 again note the seraphim and their constant cries: Isaiah 6:3 **And one cried unto**
35 **another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his**
36 **glory.**

37
38 Can we somehow comprehend the bone-chilling impact of those seraphim calling out
39 with non-human, eternity-echoing voices: "Holy....." one cries out. Here comes the call
40 back: "Holy....!" And from another location overhead, "Holy....!" It would cause you

1 and me to shake if we heard it with our natural ears. All over Heaven the proclaiming is
2 heard, "Holy.....Holy...**HOLY!**"

3
4 But why is that word "holy" repeated, not only then, but throughout the centuries? We
5 know for example that God is love, but nowhere do we read of Heaven crying out, "Love,
6 love, Love!" Or we know that our Heavenly Father is merciful, but we do not hear
7 angels crying, "Merciful, merciful, merciful!" The Bible never says that God is wrath,
8 wrath, wrath or justice, justice, justice. But it does proclaim that God is holy, holy, holy,
9 the whole earth is full of His glory.

10
11 There is something about God's presence that accentuates the reality of Who He is! On
12 the opposite side of God's mercy, hear this angel cry out in Rev. 8:13: **And I beheld,**
13 **and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice,**
14 **Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the**
15 **trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!** Why the repetition?

16
17 The repetition of a name or an expression three times (called a *trihagion*) was common
18 among the Jews. In Jeremiah 7:4, the Jews are represented by the prophet as saying,
19 "The temple of the Lord" three times, expressing their intense confidence in their own
20 worship. You will find similar passages in Jeremiah 22:29, Ezekiel 21:27 and 2 Samuel
21 18:33. So when the angels around the throne call or cry to one another "Holy, holy,
22 holy," they are expressing with force and passion the truth of the supreme holiness of God
23 - that essential characteristic which expresses His awesome and majestic nature.

24
25

The *trihagion* expresses the triune nature of God, the three Persons of the Godhead, each equal in holiness and majesty. The two visions of seraphim above the throne crying "Holy, holy, holy" clearly indicates that God is the same in both testaments (Isaiah and Revelation). Often we 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 Isaiah and John present a unified picture of our holy, majestic, awesome God who does not change (Malachi 3:6 **For I am the Lord, I change not;**), who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever**) and James 1:17 **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

26
27
28

DEFINITION OF HOLINESS

1 We have a problem with this as humans for to us a holy person is someone with a
2 standard just a bit higher than normal. That doesn't even come close to the definition
3 we need when it comes to God's holiness. To begin:

4
5 To be holy is to be distinct, separate, in a class by oneself. The primary meaning of *holy*
6 is "separate." When we find a garment or another piece of merchandise that is
7 outstanding, that has a superior excellence, we use the expression, "That is a cut above
8 the rest." That certainly holds true a million times over when it comes to God's
9 holiness.

10
11 When the Bible declares that God is holy it means primarily that He is transcendentally
12 separate. He is so far above and beyond us that He is almost totally foreign to us.
13 Exodus 15:11 **Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee,**
14 **glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?** 1 Samuel 2:2 **There is none**
15 **holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our**
16 **God.**

17
18 This is a journey into the unknown for us. Beyond our comprehension. *Until we have*
19 *seen ourselves as God sees us, we are not likely to be much disturbed over conditions*
20 *around us as long as they do not get so far out of hand as to threaten our comfortable*
21 *way of life. We have learned to live with unholiness and have come to look upon it as*
22 *the natural and expected thing. We are not qualified to appreciate the holiness of God.*
23 *Quite literally a new channel must be cut through the desert of our minds to allow the*
24 *sweet waters of truth that will heal our great sickness to flow in.*

25 THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY / TOZER / CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS / PAGE 110-111

26
27 God's holiness is all encompassing. By that I mean His holiness is not just another part
28 of Who He is. So we don't declare, "God is Spirit....God is merciful....God is just....He
29 is also holy." No, we dare not state such an unqualified opinion. The word HOLY
30 applied to God does not signify just one single attribute. The word HOLY applies to
31 everything He truly is. His love is A HOLY LOVE....His mercy is a HOLY MERCY...
32 His knowledge is HOLY KNOWLEDGE....His Spirit is HOLY SPIRIT.

33 34 The Tough Lesson Learned By Moses

35
36 On several occasions I have had the privilege to be on the summit of Mount Nebo in
37 southern Jordan, overlooking to the west the Dead Sea and the first hills of Israel. It on
38 this place that Moses died and was buried by God. But until the Mount of
39 Transfiguration in the last year of Jesus' life, Moses was never actually IN Israel. Why?
40 Numbers 27:12-14 **And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount**

1 **Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. [13] And**
2 **when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy**
3 **brother was gathered. [14] For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert**
4 **of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes:**
5 **that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.**

6
7 Enroute to the Promised Land, after their miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage,
8 the Israelites came to a place called Kadesh. There appeared to be no water, which
9 frightened and even infuriated the people. They verbally assaulted Moses and his brother
10 Aaron, protesting that they had “mis-led” them to this barren land....and now - no water!

11
12 Moses asked God for an answer and God commanded Moses to take his walking stick, his
13 “rod,” to a gigantic rock and SPEAK to it. He promised Moses that water would flow
14 from the rock. But Moses was so mad at this rejection from the people that when he got
15 to the rock he struck it two times. Water gushed out. It still does (at a place I have
16 visited several times called Wadi Musa - Well of Moses.)

17
18 Moses’ act, while bringing needed water to the people, offended the holiness of God, an
19 act so serious that God forbade Moses to enter into the promised land. Why was God so
20 strong in His reaction to Moses’ anger? Numbers 20:12 **And the Lord spake unto**
21 **Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the**
22 **children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which**
23 **I have given them.** One translation puts it this way: **Because you have not believed**
24 **Me - to treat Me as holy in the sight of Israel....** Striking that rock was an act of
25 disobedience to God, failure to obey His directive.

26
27

My good friend, if Moses who was used by God to liberate Jews from slavery, whom
God honored by allowing him to encourage His own Son Jesus on Mount Hermon (the
Mount of Transfiguration), if even he could not get away by belittling the holiness of
God....how in the world do you think you can?

28
29 **Isaiah’s Response To God’s Holiness**

30
31 When the prophet of God was shown the blazing holiness of God, he cried out, “Woe is
32 me!” And he continued, in our words today, “Oh God...have mercy on me for I have a
33 filthy mouth! I am a man of unclean lips! I am an obscenity in Your sight!”

34
35 What a far, far cry from the self-appeasing braggadocio of many in pulpits today! “Oh
36 God,” he cried, “this is like staring into the sun and going blind! I see my pathetic estate

1 and I am undone!” Isaiah was not impressed with his “significance” for he had none
2 without God’s mercy. The fact he was being given this vision of God’s holiness did not
3 make him swell with pride: “Look who I am! Look what God is showing me!” No, no -
4 just the opposite. His vision of the holiness of God caused Isaiah to lament his utter
5 sinfulness. When he saw what the divine holiness really was....any sense of his own
6 importance collapsed. He was now surrounded by the earthquake and the smoke-filled
7 Temple - as dramatic a vision of God and His holiness as one could ever behold.

8
9 And God responded by sending an angel to that great altar in eternity where he took
10 “tongs” to secure a red hot coal - so hot that even an angel dared not touch it - and in
11 obedience to God’s command he placed that coal on Isaiah’s lips! Consider it! The lips
12 are part of the most sensitive part of the human body - which is why a kiss is so
13 expressive. The coal seared the mouth of the prophet. Can you feel it? Amidst the
14 sizzling burning of his lips, the prophet learned that only that which came from God
15 through him amounted to anything at all.

16
17 So....what do we take away from tonight’s study?

- 18
19 1. A revelation of God’s holiness is essential to everyone of us. It will govern our
20 thinking on a modern-day saying that God accepts us unconditionally, which, in part, is
21 true. But after encountering a holy God, a change of lifestyle is demanded.
22
- 23 2. I must take another look at this matter of “self-esteem.” Today many in churches are
24 being taught of their self-esteem; the Bible teaches us that we are unclean, undone,
25 hopeless, outside of the mercy of God.
26
- 27 3. Our worship of a holy God must be done in a holy manner, one of reverence and awe.
28
- 29 4. God’s holiness should motive us to be about our Father’s business and reaching the
30 lost, dying world.
31
32

33 In two weeks, we will continue our study, The Pursuit of God.
34
35
36
37
38
39
40