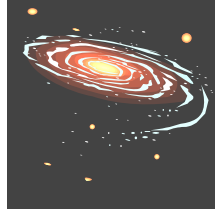


# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD



Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship  
Placerita Baptist Church  
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## **The Holiness of God** by Bill Barrick

### **Introduction**

This past week the 29th Summer Olympic Games opened in Beijing. Olympic history provides a fascinating illustration with regard to the concept of holiness. In the ancient Greek games, when it was impossible to determine a victor, the presiding officials assigned the prize to one of the gods. *Hiera* in the Greek meant a “dead heat”—a tie without resolution. In the New Testament, the same Greek word occurs in words for “priest” and “temple.” Paul employs it in 1 Corinthians 9:13 for “sacred service” and in 2 Timothy 3:15 for the “sacred writings” (Scripture). Scripture writers do not use *hiera* as the most common Greek term for holiness, but it is one of the terms. Holiness, according to this particular illustration, refers to that which is totally other, that which one dedicates completely to God alone.

- How superficial is your view of God?  
Who is He? Is everything about Him related merely to you and your welfare?
- What one word comes to mind when you hear the word “holy”?  
Humiliation? Robed? Sexless? Humorless? Fasting? Monks?
- First reference to God’s holiness occurs in Exodus 15:11.

### **I. Holiness Is the Crown of Divine Attributes**

<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."  
[Isaiah 6:1–5, NAU]

God's holiness is fundamental to God's character.

Scripture first confronts the reader with God's sovereignty. However, His sovereignty is intimately connected with His holiness.

"The Bible itself . . . calls God *holy* more than anything else. *Holy* is the epithet most often affixed to his name."<sup>1</sup>

See Revelation 15:4 and Matthew 6:9.

### A. Definition of "Holy"

First of all, holiness sets God apart from His creation. It distinguishes Him from everything. God's majesty links His holiness to His sovereignty. God's holiness involves proclaiming Him as "Wholly Other." In other words, "not to revere God as holy is not to revere God as God."<sup>2</sup> Secondly, holiness identifies God's absolute moral perfection. He is without sin.

In short, God is *incomparable* to others and He is *incompatible* with sin. God's holiness appears to be closely related to His transcendence. That reminds us that His attributes are interwoven with one another, not isolated from one another.

See 1 Samuel 2:2 (Hannah's song).

### B. Demonstration of God's Holiness

1. God is unique and absolutely incomparable—He alone is God, the Exalted One, the Most High, the Creator, the King, and the Redeemer (Isaiah 40:12–28; 41:1–29; 43:1–13; 44:6–8; 45:1–7, 18–46:13).
2. God hates sin (Amos 5:21–23).
3. God judges sin and sinners in His wrath (Isaiah 5:16; Ezekiel 28:22 (to execute judgment = to manifest holiness); Revelation 6:10). Divine wrath exhibits divine holiness. By it He shows that He is holy (Numbers 20:13—to judge = to prove holy); 1 Samuel 6:20).
4. God loves righteousness (Psalm 11:7; cp. v. 6).

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology*, revised edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 125.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson, "I Peter," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1018.

One of the oldest names for God is "the Holy One" (Job 6:10). This name (most often "the Holy One of Israel") is the key divine title in the Book of Isaiah (1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; etc. — a total of 30 times).

### C. Key Scripture References to God's Holiness

A number of references deal with both aspects of God's holiness. Some, however, are more focused on one of the two aspects.

1. He is *incomparable* to others:
  - Exodus 15:11
  - Leviticus 11:45; 20:7, 26; 22:2, 32
  - 1 Samuel 2:2
  - Job 6:10
  - Psalms 22:3; 60:6; 71:22; 77:13; 98:1; 99:3, 5, 9; 111:9
  - Proverbs 9:10
  - Isaiah 1:4; 5:16, 19, 24; 6:1–5; 8:13; 29:23; 40:25; 52:10; 55:5; 57:15
  - Ezekiel 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:20–23
  - Matthew 6:9 ("hallowed" = "made holy")
  - Luke 1:35; 4:34
  - John 17:11
  - Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30
  - Hebrews 7:26 ("holy [*not the normal word*], innocent [= without guile or wickedness], undefiled [pure], separated from sinners and exalted")
  - Revelation 3:7; 4:8; 6:10; 15:4; 16:5
  
2. He is *incompatible* with sin:
  - Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:3, 7, 26; 21:6, 8
  - Numbers 20:13
  - 1 Samuel 6:20
  - Psalms 89:35; 98:1
  - Isaiah 1:4; 5:16, 24; 6:1–5; 52:10
  - Ezekiel 28:22, 25; 36:20–23
  - Luke 1:35; 4:34
  - John 17:11
  - Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30
  - Hebrews 7:26 (see comments on this verse above)
  - 1 Peter 1:15, 16
  - Revelation 3:7; 6:10; 15:4; 16:5

## II. God's Holiness Has an Effect upon All Who Contact It

### A. Effect upon Israel

Leviticus 10:3 – Those who come near to serve the LORD must treat Him as holy. Therefore, when Moses failed to do this, he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12). Cp. Joshua 24:19.

Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:6, 8 – God's people must be holy as He is holy.

### B. Effect upon the Nations

Ezekiel 36:20–23; 38:23; 39:7 – When the Lord demonstrates that He alone is the God of Israel and that He requires that they treat Him as such and show themselves also holy (different from all other nations, as well as separated from sin), all the nations will know Who He is.

### C. Effect upon New Testament Believers

- Since God is incomparably holy, what does that say about us?

We are not God; we are sinners.

“If we don't understand the holiness of God, we won't understand our own sinfulness.”<sup>3</sup>

- How can we be holy? (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1)

See 2 Corinthians 3:18.

1. The Spirit of God makes us holy (sanctified) as we behold (fix our attention on) God's holiness in Jesus Christ.
2. When we fix our attention on our Savior's holiness, we become like Him — we begin to delight in imitating His holy example.
3. Our sanctification is gradual and increasing in this life.
4. Total holiness becomes our character only when we at last see Jesus (1 John 3:2).

- How should we manifest the *incomparable* aspect of holiness?

We belong irrevocably to God.

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<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *God: Coming Face to Face with His Majesty* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 47.

- How should we manifest the *incompatible* aspect of holiness?

We should avoid and hate sin.

“When God’s holiness is recognized and displayed, it has the effect of silencing the prideful claims of arrogant and rebellious men.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Holy, Holy, Holy**

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Words and Music by John B. Dykes

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Which, wert and art and ever more shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy Glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy — there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in pow’r, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name in earth and sky and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

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<sup>4</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 58.