



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“The Holiness of God (The Attribute of Attributes)”

7:30. And I know a lot of you are going to rush home to hear Oral Roberts, [laughter] and so I guess that we had better begin. And if you're not going to hear Oral Roberts, there's another childish thing on tonight too -- I think -- called Hansel and Gretel, and Mary is rushing home to look at that because anything that has to do with kids; she likes. Now seriously I'm sure that Oral Roberts program will be very good. Just don't pay a whole lot of attention to the theology [laughter] of the leader of the program. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. And we acknowledge Lord that we come to them with a sense of inadequacy not only in our ability to expound Thy word but in our comprehension of the great truths that are contained in it. Who can understand the attributes of God? Who is a God likened to Thee? And who is able to expound Thee? Who is able to instruct Thee? Who is able even to hear perfectly Thine instructions or Thy instructions? And so Lord we pray that tonight as we listen to the testimony of the word of God that the Holy Spirit may teach us in the supernatural way in that we may be able to comprehend things that are

incomprehensible to us, except he teach us. So we commit this hour to Thee and we look forward to Thine blessing upon us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject tonight as we come to the next to the last lesson in our series on the attributes is, “The Holiness of God or the Attribute of the Attributes.” And for Scripture reading tonight, I want you to turn with me to Exodus chapter 15, verse 11. I want to read one verse there. And then we want to read the sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah. Exodus chapter 15, verse 11. Now this is the great song of Israel after the Egyptians had been drowned in the Red Sea. And it is a singing of praise to God for his judgment upon Egypt. And in the midst of it we read verse 11, “Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?” Now, let’s turn over to Isaiah chapter 6. And let’s read this chapter’s thirteen verses, Isaiah chapter 6,

“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. 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. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 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.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 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.’ Then I heard the voice

"The Holiness of God (the Attribute of Attributes)" by S. Lewis Johnson
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of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' -- notice the plural -- Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go, and tell this people; 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed."

Amazing message of judgment. No preacher would like a message like this but this is the message Isaiah was called upon to give.

"Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' And He answered, 'Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate,' The LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

The Holiness of God or the Attribute of the Attributes.

Some attributes of God we prefer because of the benefits we derive from them. We prefer his goodness before his power. And probably most Christians like to study his goodness, his mercy, his grace; a great deal more than they like to study his power. But God delights in his attributes because of their excellencies. And it is this that makes the study of holiness so interesting. For you see, if this is really so that God delights in his attributes because of their excellencies, then the stress of unholiness would indicate that this excellency of God is something that for him has the highest value. In fact, a case can be made for making holiness *the* transcendent attribute of God. It runs through all of the other attributes and casts its luster upon all of them. For example, God is entitled "holy"

oftener than he is entitled “almighty.” He is set forth as holy more than he is by any other adjective in all of the Bible.

Now that is remarkable, for most Christians are inclined to think that God is love. And they are inclined to think that, that is the supreme attribute of God. I have a good Christian friend who attends this church. And he and I argued this a number of times, and I cannot for even a moment or two get him to consider that it might be that love is not the preeminent attribute of God. It is so ingrained in him he offers no scriptural text other than 1 John 4:8, “God is Love,” it is so ingrained in us that “God is love” that we have lost really the emphasis of the word of God. It is more upon the holiness of God than upon the love of God.

Charnock, who has written a very lengthy and hard to be understood book on the attributes, which I have been reading the past six month. It has about nine hundred pages of very, very fine print. Charnock has said, “Power is his hand and arm, omniscience his eyes, mercy his bowels (you can tell he wrote a couple of hundred years ago) eternity his duration, his holiness is his beauty.” And then he comments on the texts and Scripture that call upon men to praise the beauty of holiness.

Now we are studying the attributes, and we have come to this attribute of the holiness of God; and next Tuesday night, the Lord willing, we will conclude our series with the study of the justice of God. Holiness is the seventh of the communicable attributes of God. So this is our topic tonight. Some of the remarkable things that are affirmed about holiness in the Bible include these. Holiness is the term used by God to describe himself. In the book of Isaiah chapter 40, for example, God calls himself holy. Let’s look at a few of these texts. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 25. Perhaps by looking at the text, you and I both may be able to catch something of the flavor of the Bible on this great teaching concerning God’s holiness. Verse 25 of Isaiah chapter 40. Listen as Isaiah says giving the words of God, “To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal? says the Holy One.”

Now notice when he says, “says the Holy One.” Isaiah is telling us what God is saying. These are God’s words. And so God has spoken to Isaiah and to us. These are not Isaiah’s words, “To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?” says the Holy One.” Turn over to Hosea chapter 11, verse 9. This one is probably even clearer in the light of the punctuation of my edition. Hosea chapter 11, verse 9. This is one of the great passages of the prophecy of Hosea and it speaks of the struggle that God had over the forgiveness of his sinful people. And it concludes in verse 9 by God’s decision that he will not execute fierce anger, that he does not explain in Hosea how this can be done. It is not until Paul tells in Romans 3 that the Son of God has been set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood that we learn how God can pass over sin, but he says, “I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath.”

And so holiness is the term used by God to describe himself. If you were to say to God, “Who are you?” He might well say, “I am the Holy One.” He does not as often say, “I am the loving one but I am the Holy One.” As you know from reading the book of Isaiah, one of the characteristic terms for God is the Holy one of Israel.

Second, holiness is the term used by the Lord Jesus of himself. In the book of Revelation chapter 3, verse 7, in the midst of the letter to the church at Philadelphia, we read, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write -- the Lord is unfolding these letters -- He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this, ‘So the letter to the church at Philadelphia is the letter of our Lord Jesus and he calls himself the one who is holy.’” Holiness is the term then used by the Lord Jesus of himself.

Third, holiness is a term used of the third person of the Trinity. Now we don’t have to look up texts about this but we all know that the third person of the Trinity is called the Holy Spirit. And this is a striking fact that this person, one of the three persons of the Trinity, our one God who subsist in three persons; one of these persons has the

title of the Holy Spirit. In other words that adjective is the most characteristic adjective of the activities and the person of one of the members of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, not the loving spirit, but the Holy Spirit; that is his title. That is his name.

Fourth, holiness is ascribed by the persons of the Trinity to one another.

Look at John chapter 14, verse 16 and 17, before we look at verse 26. John 14:16 through 17 contains our Lord's announcement of the coming of the Spirit and we read in the upper room discourse, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." Who is this Spirit of truth, this Helper for which our Lord asks? And then in verse 26, we have the identification, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." Jesus does not call him the loving Spirit but he calls him the Holy Spirit. And this is the term that the members of the Trinity use when referring to each other. Our Lord is the Holy one of Israel. God is glorious in his Holiness. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit is the spirit. I think you probably can begin to catch something of the emphasis of the Bible on the term holiness.

Fifth, holiness is the splendor of every attribute of God his love, his holy love; his justice, his holy justice; his wisdom, his holy wisdom. In fact, the Bible says concerning the name of God, that it is holy.

Now you know from reading the Scriptures that when you come across the term, "the name of God," by Hebraic idiom that is a term that refers to the essential nature of God. When we say God's name is holy, we mean God is holy. Or when we say his name is great, we mean he is great. That's the way they referred a person's essential being, his name. What is his name? What are you essentially? And in the Psalm 111, verse 9 it says, "Holy and reverend is Thy name." That as you know -- I have said this to some of you not to all of you -- that as you know, at least, that is the only occurrence in

the authorized version -- I think -- maybe there’s one other case of the use of the term reverend; a term which many preachers have taken to themselves.

If you will look down the pages of your telephone book, you will find the Reverend Doctor So-and-So or the Reverend So-and-So. It’s a striking thing that this adjective, which really means awful. And no one would ever say the Reverend or the Awful Doctor So-and-So or the Awful Mr. So-and-So. It really means awful in the sense of awesome. But isn’t it interesting that preachers have taken to themselves one of the attributes of God. Holy and reverend is Thy name; and we have stolen that attribute Mr. Spurgeon said and attached it to our names. So don’t call me reverend. [Laughter] I don’t want to be called reverend. I don’t want anyone to call me reverend, for Holy and reverend is Thy name; not my name. And so here in this text then God’s name, his essential being is holy and awesome because of that holiness.

Sixth, holiness is one of the attributes God swears by. Twice in the Bible he says, “I swear by my holiness.” Psalm 89, verse 35. Let’s look at that so you can see just one of them. The other is in Amos chapter 4, verse 2. Psalm 89, verse 35. “Once have I sworn by my holiness; I will not lie unto David:”

Now the Bible does say that one time that God swears by his power, but twice by his holiness. So far as I know it never says that he swears by his love. Now again I think you can see how important this is to God. He swears by himself the Bible says in another place. And so to describe himself, it’s as if holiness is the adjective that -- or the noun which most effectively sets forth what God is. He is holy.

And finally, holiness is the saints’ responsibility. As you know, I’ve announced this to you in order to be sure that I finish my reading on time. If I tell enough people I’m going to do this then I will probably be a great deal more persevering in it, but I’m reading through this Bible, the New American Standard Bible. And I’m trying to finish it by July the first and I’m just about at page 400 now and I have to do about 450 pages next month. But in my reading, I have noticed in reading through the book of Leviticus

more than once God said to Israel, “you be holy because I am holy.” He does not say, “you be holy as I am holy,” for that is impossible but, “you be holy because I am holy.” Twice in Leviticus it is said chapter 11, verse 44 and verse 45; chapter 19, verse 2. And then you’ll remember the New Testament Peter in the first chapter of his epistle says the same thing quoting those texts, “Be Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.” So holiness then is perhaps the characteristic attribute of God. It is the adjective that describes him. It is the attribute that most effectively speaks of what God is. He is holy.

Now we’re going to see in a moment why that is true because that word has a meaning, which marks God off from every other person in this universe and distinguishes him from all.

Now, let’s turn to our outline, and Roman I: The nature of the divine holiness: Its definition.

Only God, of course, is holy absolutely, necessarily, immutably and eternally. Both testaments proclaim this. In 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 2, it says that God alone is holy. And then in Revelation chapter 15, verse 4, the Bible states that Thou alone art holy. So in the sense of absolute holiness, in the sense of his necessary holiness, in the sense of his immutable holiness, in the sense of his eternal holiness, God is absolutely distinct from every other person. Charnock says “It is the peculiar glory of his nature and there is none good but God, so none holy but God. No creature can be essentially holy because mutable” -- that is, because he means they are mutable. “Holiness is the substance of God. but a quality and an accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy; creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himself. Creatures are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy but holiness. Holiness in the highest degree is his soul prerogative.”

Capital A: Its definition.

Holiness has a twofold character. First, it is his absolute transcendence and his supreme majesty. So when we speak of God as being a Holy God we are speaking of the

fact that he is absolutely transcendent. That is he is above and beyond all of us, and absolutely. He is supreme in his majesty. He is over all. In this sense, holiness is not really a moral attribute. It’s something coexisted with and applicable to everything that can be said of God. And when we say that he is holy in the sense of the fact that he is exalted, we are not speaking of an essential attribute of his being. The fact that John calls Isaiah’s vision, a vision of his glory, in chapter 12, verse 41 of his gospel, suggests the reflection of his essence and his attributes in the holiness of God there. In other words, John sees the vision of Isaiah as being a vision of God in his essence and also in the expression or reflection of these attributes, particularly holiness as being an expression of his glory. So the glory of his holiness is what John sees in that chapter.

Now, let me, for a few moments, talk a little about these words. We have done this once before when we were talking about the doctrine of sanctification but some of you weren’t here. There are two words for holiness in the Bible, primarily. One is an Old Testament word as you would expect, and one is a New Testament word. The Old Testament word is the Hebrew word *qawash*, and *qawash* is a word that comes from a root that means to cut -- many think -- or to be separated. At least the idea of separation or withdrawal is contained within in.

Now the New Testament word has the same force, *bagiazo*, the New Testament word, is the word that means to set apart. And so both of these words have the idea of separation. In the Old Testament, surprisingly -- at first thought perhaps -- the term *qawash* is used in several of its forms of sacred persons who were attached to a temple. In fact, it is used of prostitutes and they are called “holy.” They are called *qawash’a*. And it is used of Sodomites. Men, they are called *qawashe*. And you can see from this the word in that sense does not have any sense of ethical purity. It is something that means simply to set apart for a particular service.

I may walk in my study, as I will tonight, and if my Greek testament and my Hebrew testament, which I have here bound together, were sitting upon my desk I might

take them and put them over right in front of me as I sit down and put them up against a book. And I could be said to be sanctifying my Greek and Hebrew testaments for my study, for I have put them in a particular place so that now I am able to study them. Those words mean to set apart. They mean to separate for a purpose essentially, so that a sanctified person is someone who is set apart for a particular service or a sanctified thing is something that is set apart for a particular service. It does not necessarily have any ethical connotations in that sense. Just as a prostitute in a heathen temple may be set apart for the sexual use of the worshippers in their vile religions, so it could be said and said rightly that, that person is a sanctified person, set apart for a particular use and the Sodomites the same way.

Now we’re not inclined to associate the word whore or harlot with sanctification, but that is the idea of the word. So you can see from this that the term has the sense of separation cutoff from others. Now when we apply this to God and we say that he is the sanctified one, the holy one, we mean he is set apart from men. He is separated from us. He is not like us. We mean he is unique. We mean he is unapproachable. We mean he is incomprehensible. We mean he is supremely majestic above us. We mean he is sovereign over us. All these things we mean when we say Thou alone art holy.

Now modern theologians like to speak of God as the Holy other one. And Evangelicals are inclined to laugh at that because they don’t really feel that it’s quite in accordance with their Christian experience to get down on their knees and say, “Oh Thou Holy Other one.” It’s like Dr. Tillich’s word for God as the ground of our being. And it is not customary for evangelical Christians to get down on their knees and say, “Oh Thou ground of my being.” We just don’t say things like that; we are more familiar with our God.

And so we call him Father and we say, “Oh Thou heavenly Father or my heavenly Father or Oh God.” But really the term “the holy other” is a very good expression of the holiness of God, and a term that does effectively describe him as one who is different

from all of us. And that my dear friend is why the holiness of God is more significant as an attribute of God than his love; for his holiness is the term that marks him out as different from you and me. So that is why basically holy more than he is loving, because he is different from us.

And that word effectively says it. He is different from us. And so the fundamental attribute of God, the most important attribute -- if we are allowed to make any comparisons like this. I’m not sure we are really. But if we are I would say God is holy, more than I would say that he is love -- though he is, of course, both. And I’m delighted he is both. So the first thing we can say about holiness is that it is his absolute transcendence and his supreme majesty. So when we think of God as holy we should think of him as supremely majestic in his greatness in heaven.

Now these things have some tremendous practical applications and I want to say something about them later on. The second, it is his absolute ethical purity. Now this is an outgrowth of the other idea because God is absolutely transcendent and supreme in his majesty and different from us. It’s an easy step from that to say that he is absolutely pure, absolutely holy ethically. In his case, he is set apart for everything that is holy and good. And when we are called saints for we are all called saints -- even Bob Thurman sitting up here on the first row is a saint in spite of the fact that he’s a Longhorn. He is a saint. He’s a saintly Longhorn.

Now that term “holy” is a term that is applied to us as set apart once. Now because we are set apart by a holy God that word then begins to have some ethical connotations for us. A holy Christian should manifest in his life holiness because he’s the child of a holy father. So because of association with God the word, which in itself does not have any ethical connotations, begins to have ethical connotations. So God is holy in the sense of absolute ethical purity.

Now this is both negative and positive. That is, he is free from pollution. Now that’s the negative side. He is not touched by any sin or pollution. And the positive is

that his nature is characterized by perfect rectitude. The positive is true of him as well. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity, Habakkuk says. So he is absolutely holy. No infection and every thought every activity is positively holy. That is his characteristic.

Now when we think of God in his first aspect, as one who is supremely majestic that has its effect upon us and produces in us awe because of his greatness, but when we think of him as absolutely pure that has the effect of convicting us of our sin. And so these two aspects of God's holiness affect in these two ways. One of them causes us to acknowledge his greatness, his majesty, his difference from us. The other one causes us to look at ourselves and see, as Isaiah did, that we are ruined, that we are people of unclean lips and we dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips.

Holy in English is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words *holig* and *hal*. And those words meant whole. And it's interesting -- I think -- because the holy man is the man who is whole, W-H-O-L-E. That is he's the man who's healthy. The man who is unholy is the sick man, sick morally. So the holy man is the healthy man and holiness then is characteristic of health, spiritual health. The holy Christian is the healthy Christian. The unholy Christian is the sick Christian.

Now let me define. What is God's holiness? Well it is his absolute transcendence and his absolute purity. Shortening it. It is composed of two emphases, his absolute transcendence and ethical purity.

Now in the light of this, what do you think of modern theology's new morality, Which says in effect that the principle by which we judge actions is not whether it is right or wrong according to the revelation of God and holy Scripture, but does it measure up to the standard of love for our fellow man and right actions toward them? Why I think that you can see that this is an insult against God. To say that we may lie and cheat and steal and commit adultery and even murder in the interest of God is positively blasphemous. If we recognize that God has revealed himself as the absolutely supremely majestic one,

who is absolutely pure and calls upon men to be holy for I am holy. As a matter of fact, that means that every judgment that God ever exercises is really in the final analysis, a holy act of preservation.

Let me illustrate. I say I've been reading through the Bible. I'm really enjoying this. In fact, when I get through, I'm going to read it through again this year. I have puzzled as everybody does for years as to why God exterminated the Canaanites. Why did he exterminate not only the men, but even the women and children; awful? Why? Well because he is holy and because he desires his people to be holy. And because unholiness is sickness, sin, a cancer in human society and ultimately is to our detriment because it ultimately means our death. It was his goodness that exterminated the Canaanites not his hardness. And so every act of holiness is a holy act of preservation for his goodness sake.

Yesterday when I was coming home from Lufkin -- I was preaching Sunday in Lufkin -- I read the *Dallas Morning News* and when I got home and looked at my paper here in Dallas, this article wasn't in the paper. Maybe you didn't see it. It was in one of the morning news -- the one that I bought in Lufkin. It's entitled "Amen, It is Legal" and the heading of the article is "Bar Owner gets Religion Barely" -- B-A-R-E-L-Y. And it's a story of a bar owner whose liquor entertainment licenses were revoked because of the nude dancers he employed. And the article went on to say that this bar that he has in Pasadena reopened as a church. And the congregation, "Still gets to watch the nude dancers and stag films, and the beer is free." And it's called the High Life Social Club Church. And he is, "The ancient highest head priest of the church." [Laughter] And then he explains what he is doing. He says what we are basically doing is saying that people can go to church and still have fun. "We're not up there preaching or this kind of stuff." And the state of California says that there is nothing illegal about it. That he is giving away the beer. He does pick up free will offerings. And consequently their hands are tied.

Now there are a lot of people who say you ought to be able to go to church and have fun. And I must confess I’ve been in a lot of churches that I really didn’t want to go to because when I got there I didn’t have any fun. And they were legalistic. They said things that were not fun. They did not preach the word. They stressed the negatives and all of the things that really take all of the joy out of Christianity. And I can understand when a man gets up and says, “When you go to church on Sunday morning there should be a holy enthusiasm to go to church.” But we must remember that when we come to hear the ministry of the word of God, it should be characterized by holiness. And what he says is having fun, is really just sinning.

Now that too is fun to the natural man, and fun for the sin major, but in God’s sight this kind of lewdness is obviously contrary to the Scriptures and sin. Now, of course, he doesn’t make any claim to be a Christian. And I’m not suggesting that we should deal with him as a Christian. I’m just saying that we as Christians should remember there is a place when our fun becomes dangerous and it is when it nears the place where the word of God speaks against it. So as Christians, let’s have fun. Let’s look forward to the ministry of the word. Let’s look forward to the excitement of it.

I don’t know how many letters I received when I was preaching regularly here at Believers Chapel. People saying something like this, “I started coming to Believers Chapel three months ago. I want you to know that the ministry of the word God has meant the salvation of our household. And for the first time in my life after 25 or 15 or 30 years of attending church when Sunday morning comes around we look forward to going to hear the ministry of the word of God.” Now, that I think is the result of the activity of the Holy Spirit through the word. But let’s be sure that it stays that way.

Capital B: Its evaluation.

I’m speaking of every church. Holy then is not the standard of God. He is holy. We don’t judge God by holiness, for that is part of his nature. That’s why he swears by his holiness. That’s what he is essentially. It’s not by some outside standard by which we

judge God. It is God. By the way, it is the only attribute in the Bible, so far as I know, which is trebled. When God is referred to, we have in Isaiah, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts." In the book of Revelation, we have the same thing in the fourth chapter, "Holy, holy, holy the living creatures sang." You never find the Scripture saying, "Eternal, eternal, eternal is God." But this is the one attribute that is singled out, "Love, love, love is God." No. "Holy, holy, holy is God."

Finally, Its comprehension: C.

The natural man is blind to holiness. He does not understand it. And the spiritual man is half blind. He's myopic, all of us. We cannot understand God's holiness. We need new channels cut through the deserts of our minds to understand holiness and we will not have them until we get to heaven, if then. His holiness is -- we are inclined to think is -- the most pure thing that I can think of magnified to infinity; that's God's holiness. No my dear friend that is our poor inadequate comprehension of what his holiness is. It is incomprehensible. It is unapproachable. It is unattainable. It is absolutely unique. When we speak of God's holiness, we get down on our knees and get down before God and worship but not in complete understanding.

Roman II: The expression of the divine holiness.

There are two expressions of it, first, in the divine law. Just for the sake of our study I want to very briefly refer to general revelation and special revelation. These are expressions of God's holiness.

When we talk about general revelation remember we're talking about God's revelation in history, in providence, in nature, in conscience. And God's holiness is revealed in general revelation. For example, God's holiness is revealed in the moral law that speaks through a man's conscience even when he does not know God. Men who do not know God have some sense of holiness. It is because God has implanted it in their being. They are not able to respond to its teaching for they are in sin, but they recognize it. And thus they have the sense of gift.

Men who are not Christians have the sense of guilt. Men even go crazy because of the sense of guilt when they are not even Christians, because God has implanted in men a conscience. And that little conscience brings conviction and guilt. God’s holiness is revealed in the physical walls that secure happiness to virtue and misery with vice. These are natural laws. Men who live in sin suffer. Men who live upright lives according to the world, they fair much better. That is God’s natural law; whether they are Christians or not these are divine principles. God’s holiness is revealed in metal laws. Men who -- generally speaking -- are obedient and live obedient lives in society, well they have peace of mind. Others who are disobedient do not have peace of mind. These are revelation of the holiness of God in general revelation.

In special revelation, however, we have the essence, the supreme revelation of God’s holiness. And here I’m referring first to the Mosaic law of the Old Testament. That law springs not from nature or the human mind, but from God’s freedom. The symbols and the types of the Old Testament were designed to teach the nation the holiness of God. Reading through the Old Testament again, I noticed these expressions since I’m thinking about the attributes. Expressions like the holy place, the holy place, the holy priesthood, the holy land. Actually, the holy land only occurs about once, but the idea of Palestine being set apart is there, or the holy nation. These expressions in the Old Testament were designed to be illustrative of what God wished to teach through Israel’s revelation in the Mosaic law.

And supremely the holiness of God is taught in the revelation of Jesus Christ. And perhaps the epitome of it in his teaching was the Sermon on the Mount when he took the Old Testament and interpreted it completely. The Old Testament said that men were not to commit adultery. Jesus said when a man looked upon a woman to lust after her he had already committed adultery. He actually heightened and intensified the teaching of the law pointing out what God really meant by that law in the Old Testament. And so God spoke to us of his holiness in his Son.

Now, capital B: The divine emotions or will.

The perfection of God in his disposition reflects his holiness too, for he says in the Bible, “that he delights impurity.” He also says that abhors evil. One text that sets both of these forth is Hebrews chapter 1, verse 13 where it is said, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” And so this is an expression of the holiness of God in the emotions or in the will of God. And so he has expressed his holiness in his revelation and he has expressed his holiness in his statements concerning his own feelings.

Now, thirdly: The illustration of divine holiness.

And we are going to look for just a few moments now -- as we close -- at Isaiah chapter 6. So turn in you Bibles over to Isaiah chapter 6, which is the great chapter in which Isaiah is called to the ministry of his commission from God. Alexander McLaren in his exposition of Isaiah chapter 6 entitles it “The making of a prophet.” Others have said it should be entitled “The vision and the voice.” It is Isaiah’s cleansing, his call and his commission.

Now notice the occasion in the first verse, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.” Now to understand Isaiah chapter 6 thoroughly we need to understand Uzziah, the King. Do you remember in the Old Testament Uzziah is said to have been one of the great kings of Israel? He was a king who reigned about fifty years. He was such a great king that it was said that no one had been a king like Uzziah since Solomon in the land of the Judah. He was called Ezra or Jehovah is my helper, as well as Azah, Jehovah is his strength. And this great reign that Uzziah had, in which he strengthened Israel, in which Israel in one sense reached a zenith of power ended abruptly.

You remember when Uzziah took it upon himself in his own name to enter into the temple of God and to offer incense. He intruded into the office of the priest. Something he should never have done because God had said that that office was a holy office and should only be held by those who were of the right line and Uzziah was not of

the right line. He was a king of Judah; but he went into the holy place and as he offered his incense, suddenly, startlingly the people about him noticed that he was changing. A spot began to appear on his forehead and it was discovered that he had leprosy. God had smitten the great king who in his pride intruded into the office of the priest with leprosy and fifty-two years of great rule in Israel or Judah ended in a leper’s house. And that is where the great king died. It was God’s way of reminding Israel that the priesthood is a holy office.

Now in New Testament times he would have been thought to be a great Protestant because he was establishing the principle of the fact that a man could approach God himself and did not have to go to God through a priest. But in the Old Testament days remember God said that men could not approach him except through the Aaronic priesthood.

Now in New Testament times he tells us that no one can approach him who is not a priest too, but he also says that when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are each made priests of God. And the universal priesthood of every believer is one of the great truths of the New Testament; but any man who seeks to enter into the presence of God who is not born again and pray to God is committing a sin like Uzziah’s sin, for that God is a holy God and he is an unholy person.

So if I were not a believer in Jesus Christ and I were to fall down upon my knees and pray, “Oh God do this for me and do that for me,” I am an unholy person calling upon a holy God, he does not answer prayers like that.

Now only prayer that that holy God answers is the prayer for the forgiveness of sins. “Oh God I am unholy and Thou art holy but Christ has died for my sins forgive my sin because of that which Jesus Christ has done for me.” But Uzziah went in and he became a leper. And Isaiah who was just a young man and probably had worshipped this man, his hero, because he was a great man, Uzziah, now you see is called on to make decisions of faith. And so he has a vision. It’s a vision of a time when he was in

the temple. And as he looks, he does not see Uzziah but he sees the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted. The scepter may fall on earth. Uzziah may go, but the one who is really on the throne is still there. And so God is trying to teach Isaiah a few lessons. He's trying to say to him now, "Isaiah you as all of the citizens of Judah had great regard for Uzziah, but he has gone but I am still on the throne." Uzziah was only a tool. Isaiah, I am the holy God but no earthly props are swept away, he appears.

Now that is a lesson that every Christian has to learn. That is a lesson that we have to learn in our church life. You know when Doctor So-and-So leaves what in the world are we going to do? Well, my dear friend, God is still on the throne. God is still directing the affairs of the church that waits upon him. Or what is going to happen to me now that this has happened to me? I've lost my job. I've lost my business. I've lost this or this tragedy has occurred. Or my daughter is thinking about marrying that bum. [Laughter] Or something like that. My dear friend, God is still on the throne. He is still supreme, still sovereign. As a matter of fact, he's still holy. You can see from this that the sense of holiness that Isaiah is introduced to is the sense of the exalted one. That's the first aspect of holiness that is stressed here.

Well, let's read on, "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. Seraphim -- that word by the way in Hebrew means burners -- because in God's presence there is no ice, no coldness. Everything is warm and everything is hot in his presence. That's why in the church when people get together and there is no sense of vitality in the church, no sense of life you can be sure God is not there.

Now I know Vance Havner says, "In some churches he's frozen and in others he's fried, but to be fried is a little closer to the character of God than to be frozen in church." So the Seraphim, the burners, "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 -- they flew.

And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

Now you can see we're still thinking about holiness in the sense of God's sovereign majesty. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." The Seraphim, they are very close to God. They are characterized by reverence and activity. They sing the otherness of God, "...Holy, Holy, Holy...." No failure in God as in Uzziah's case.

Now, in verse 5, "Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined!'" Now the Bible says in the book of Isaiah, "He is holy but he is the holy one of Israel." Now that's an amazing thing you know. The Holy One of Israel. Think of that. Holy one should not go with Israel, for Israel is a sinful nation.

Isaiah begins his book by saying, "Ah, sinful nation." But he is the Holy One of Israel because he has covenanted to bring them out of their sin. He has elected them. He has chosen them. He has guaranteed for them a future. And so here we read Isaiah saying, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!"

Now the grace shown to Isaiah into Israel is just as remarkable as the glory of God that fills the whole of the earth. And he makes his confession. The sight of God leads to a sense of sin. Now, what sense of holiness is this? Well that's the other sins. Not only is he supremely majestic, but he is also absolutely, ethically pure. And so now Isaiah looks at himself and says, "I'm ruined, I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King" -- great emphasis in the great Hebrew text -- "for the king mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts." And so the sight of the Lord leads to a sense of sin.

Now I wish I had about twenty minutes, but I have just two or three. But easygoing evangelicalism has no deep sense of sin because it has no clear vision of God. There are three besetting sins of the religious people; that's you. That's what you are, religious people. You don't like to think so, but I'm speaking of you in that sense. You

have acknowledged Jesus Christ as your Savior -- probably most of you. And probably most of you attend a church meeting of some kind. It may be in someone’s home or it may be in a giant cathedral, but you nevertheless do.

And there are three sins that are characteristic of religious people. One is callousness in worship. And it does not take long before we learn to be callous in worship. And we come in and it’s the same old thing. We come in and sit down and we go through the same old things. We talk to our friends until the service has already begun. We’re not really in ourselves looking forward for any message from God through the gathering of the saints and the ministry of the word. We have become callous. And often we cannot even appreciate the blessings of God when they come to us. And then there comes the contentment with mere form. And we sit and we do the same things over and over again, and it’s all just form to us. And then there follows, of course, carelessness in our life.

Now I want to say something else. We’re living in a day when many young people have come to know Jesus Christ the Savior. And no one is more thankful for this than I. As a matter of fact -- I think this is really the future hope of the Christian church -- the many young people that have been one to our Lord. But I must confess that when I look at the work among young people today one of the things that stands out as being tremendously lacking is the communication of the sense of the holiness of God to our new Christians. And so they straggle into our meetings, like our meeting right in that room right there. And they come in and they have on a shirt that’s hanging out over their pants and their pants have not been pressed ever – it seems to me. They are dirty and filthy and they come in and they slouch around. And I must confess I am embarrassed.

Now if I’m going out tomorrow night, I’d at least take a bath. And I’d put on a clean shirt. And I’d put on -- generally speaking -- a tie, or if not at least something that looks fairly nice. And unless my hostess says to me, “You may come in a sport shirt,” I’m more inclined to put on a tie because I think it is a matter of respect with the people with

whom I’m going to visit. And we’re going to meet with God around the table of the Lord or in the church of Jesus Christ. And so what do we do? We come barefooted, dirty, filthy. We haven’t bothered to take a bath. We slouch in and we sit.

Now, that would not be too bad if that were all done out of perfect sincerity because a person did not know any better. Now you know better, you who are young people. I’m sure that God does not for one moment think that it is wrong and bad for a new Christian who doesn’t know any better to come in like that. He is pleased with the fact that they want to listen to the word of God, but there comes a time when one should grow. And that time comes very soon in my opinion. They should learn to grow and to develop in the things of the Lord. Our God is a holy God.

Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not suggesting that if a person comes in, in his Sunday best, his loveliest suit or her most expensive and beautiful dress; groomed meticulously that they are there by acceptable to God if their hearts are not right before him, but can we not have both? And it seems to me that if we were to really recognize who our God is and the kind of God he is, we would pay a little attention to how we gather in the name of this Holy One.

Well Isaiah is cleansed because he confesses his sin. He has restored by the judgment of the sacrifice for the coals are taken from off the altar. And he has given his commission, because when a man is restored to fellowship with God through confession of sin, then he is prepared for the commission of God. And then Isaiah goes to tell Israel that their hearts are hardened and that God is going to judge. We have a far higher motivation for commission than the Seraph’s of God had, for we have been loosed from our bonds. And the redemption that we have through Jesus Christ is the greatest motivating power for the service of God that a man could have. If you are here tonight and you have never yet believed in Jesus Christ let me remind you that when you put your faith and trust in Him who died for you. You have everlasting life. You are made a

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saint of God, a Holy one and then God looks for you to manifest in your life the kind of holiness of which he has an infinite degree.

Now next Tuesday night will be our last study on the attributes and we’re going to study the justice of God, His judgment, and this is also a very important doctrine. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the truth of God. Lord help us to understand in a deeper way Thy holiness. Thou art the Holy Other One. May the Holy Spirit enable us to partake in measure of Thy holiness, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.