

# (Divine Attributes) 10 the Awesome Knowledge of the Holy

by Denny Kenaston

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*Understanding God's holiness is essential to seeing His love and mercy, and recognizing His hatred of evil.*

**Duration:** 59:57

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:13, Isaiah 6:3, Matthew 5:4, Hebrews 1:9, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 1:5

**Topics:** "Character Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of God's holiness and its importance in understanding His mercy and love. He emphasizes that God's holiness is awe-inspiring and sets Him apart from anyone else. The preacher describes a scene from the Bible where angels, who are pure and holy themselves, humble themselves in the presence of the Lord by covering their faces and feet. This act of humility demonstrates the principle that all glory veils itself in the presence of God's glory.

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## Transcript

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Can you do that in your heart? Stand before the Lord. Father, we quiet our hearts before you for these few moments. We come before you, we come boldly, boldly under the throne of grace this morning in the name of your dear Son, Jesus Christ.

We come by the blood, the blood of the everlasting covenant. We come crying to you this morning, God, that you would give us mercy and we would find grace to help, Lord, in this time of need that we have. We are in need this morning, God.

We cannot see, Lord. Our eyes are not pure enough to see, O God. Come, wash us, Lord, this morning in the blood.

Fill us with the Holy Ghost, Lord, that we might see you for who you are in all your beautiful holiness and character. Lord, please touch the eyes of our hearts this morning. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Did you notice in those two songs that we sang this morning, while both of those songs were songs about God's holiness, did you notice how many of God's attributes were mentioned in each of those two songs? We will understand why as we make our way through the message this morning.

The title of the message this morning, The Awesome Knowledge of the Holy. The Awesome Knowledge of the Holy. I have prayed much to discern which attribute to teach on next.

We are moving into attributes that will be easier for us to understand. And I have pondered, what do I share next? Do I speak about God's love? Do I speak about God's mercy? What is the proper order? As we look at all of His attributes together, what is the proper order? I have been seeking God's face for that wisdom. Shall it be God's love or His mercy? God so loved that He gave, it says in John 3.16. But then I thought, why did He give? Was it just so that you can go to heaven? No.

It is because He is a holy God. And a just God that hates sin and cannot bear it. He had to provide a way to deal with man's sin and to satisfy His holiness and set man free.

That is the reason why He gave. Aren't we glad this morning? As I see it, God revealed His holy righteous nature to His people through the law and the prophets. And promised them an answer to their undone-ness in the fullness of time.

God's love, mercy and grace find their clearest meaning in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And on the backdrop of God's demand for holiness. So it seems good to me to unveil God's attributes following the same pattern that He did.

And thus we will study God's holiness today. And we will get on to mercy and love in the days ahead. I think we need to properly understand God's mercy and His love.

And I don't see how we can understand it properly without seeing God's holiness first. I want to remind you of one of our definitions again this morning. And that's the word awesome.

Full of awe. Fear mingled with admiration. Dread inspired by greatness.

Yes, God is awesome. It is God's holiness that brings the feelings of awful admiration into the heart of man when he comes close to Him. It is God's holiness that creates those kind of feelings inside of man's heart.

It is the holy righteous character of God that makes Him transcendent. High above all. Transcendent altogether other.

It is God's holy righteous character that makes Him transcendent. Totally unlike anything we know. God said, my name is holy.

That wasn't an adjective. That was a noun. My name is holy.

Like my name is Brother Denny. God said, my name is holy. Capital H. We will look to the prophet Isaiah for our first glimpse of God's holiness this morning.

I call Isaiah the apostle of the Holy One. This is the name that he used 32 times in his book. As we have learned, name equals character when we refer to God.

Name equals character. So also with Isaiah. Name equals character.

And in Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah saw the King. And from then on, God was the Holy One. God proclaimed His name before the eyes of Isaiah.

And from then on, God was the Holy One. 32 times in the book of Isaiah. There is a reason for this.

Let's look at it. Reading in Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1 through 6. We find these beautiful words. In the year that King Uzziah died, I, Isaiah, saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.

And His train filled the temple. Train? That's the length of His robe. His hinder parts filled the temple.

Above it, the throne. Above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings.

Now, somehow in my mind, I've always said there are three. But as I studied and studied these verses, I don't find three. There could be many more than that.

But above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With twain, He covered His face.

With twain, He covered His feet. And with twain, He did fly. Can you picture that? That's called meditation.

Picture it. In the eyes of your own heart, you picture that scene. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. The outshining of His holy nature. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that tried.

And the house was filled with smoke. 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. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me.

That must have been staggering. I mean, it's one thing for me to stand back here and look at one of them creatures over there. It's another thing for one of them to fly over there by me.

And get close enough to take a hot coal off the altar and put it on my lips. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me having a live coal. Sorry, not a hot one, a live one.

A live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And I can imagine that that live coal was like all these other luminous things that we're seeing. These luminous creatures that have the glow of amber about them.

I imagine it was a luminous coal, a live coal that he took off of the altar and brought it and put it on the lips of Isaiah. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken

away, and thy sin is purged. What a scene we have here.

Getting a little glimpse into the heavenlies. This vision profoundly affected Isaiah's life from that day and forward. He was never the same.

God was the Holy One from that day forward. And he, Isaiah, was a broken, weeping prophet to God's wicked people. He spoke about God and His nature like no other.

The loftiest visions that we have about God, we find them in the book of Isaiah. And he saw the Christ. He saw the gospel.

He saw coming judgment and coming glories like no other prophet we read. So much so that theologians have called Isaiah 40 through 66 the gospel according to Isaiah. So we have five gospels, not four.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Isaiah 40 through 66. What was it that Isaiah saw that so changed him? We don't have a lot of detailed description like we did with Ezekiel's vision. Was it pretty colors? Was it the creatures that so changed his life? Was it the temple? Was it the post of the temple shaking? Was it the beauty of what he saw? No.

He tells us in the text, he says, Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. And he was never the same. Yes, he saw the King in all his beauty.

He saw the awesome Holy One that day. Isaiah saw what those seraphim saw. It is interesting to see the different responses.

That of the man, Isaiah, and that of the seraphim, the holy angels. Both saw the same thing. What does the word holy mean? Speaking, referencing from Webster's 1828 dictionary, he says, When applied to the supreme being, holy signifies perfectly pure, immaculate, and complete in moral character.

Perfectly pure and immaculate and complete in moral character. Not having any lack whatsoever in moral character. Good definition, Mr. Webster.

Holiness is unmixed purity. It means perfectly pure. And because of that, totally set apart.

Because God is perfectly pure. He is totally set apart. Set apart totally other than anyone else.

It's interesting. Studied the Greek word for holy, describing God in the New Testament. This was the definition.

I wish I had been sitting in your class on Greek word study. I would have dug deeper. But this is what it says.

An awful thing. An awful thing. Let's go back to the scene before us.

First of all, let's look at the angels. The fiery burners. The pure holy angels.

They saw the holy one. The Lord of hosts. What was their response? As pure and holy as they are.

They humbled themselves in the sight of the Lord. That's what they did. They humbled themselves in the sight of the Lord.

They had six wings. With two, they covered their face. And with two, they covered their feet.

As an act of humility in the presence of the glory of God. You see, that's a principle in heaven. All glory veils itself in the presence of the glory of God.

All glory, it's a principle in heaven. Not a law, by the way. It is the outflow and the natural response of those heavenly beings when they come into the presence of the glory of God.

Their glory gets covered. And the glory of an angel is his face. Amen? And his face shines like the sun, we read in the Scriptures.

Though he has a face that shines like the sun. And by the way, that's not a light bulb. It is the glory of God shining out of that angel.

That glory compared to the most excellent glory. That glory gets covered. That's their response.

Not only that, they cried out one to the other in such a way that the posts of the doors of the temple trembled. It shook by the sound of their voice. And they cried out, Holy, holy, holy.

This was not an obligation. These were not words that they were assigned to say when they fly into the presence of the glory of God. These are not words that they say by rote and repetition.

But rather, these are the words, the outflow of their heart's response to the glory of God. They chose the highest word from their heavenly vocabulary that they could find. And that word is holy.

The highest word there is to describe God is the word holy. That's all they could do. It says over in the book of Revelation, they cried day and night those words.

Imagine! And they never get tired of saying it. Because of His infinite, beautiful, glorious holiness, they never get tired of it. Now look at Isaiah's response.

He's a man. But I might say a holy man and a prophet. He cried also when he saw what those seraphim saw.

Only he cried, Woe is me. Woe is me. I am undone.

And I, a man of unclean lips. He chose words that describe the lowest feelings of man. The angels take the highest word in heaven to describe God.

And man, Isaiah the holy man, takes the lowest words that he could describe how he feels. Woe is me. I am undone.

And that word undone means, I am smashed to pieces. What was it that they saw? It was more than pretty glowing colors. They saw the glory of God.

The bright outshining of God's nature. They saw God's holy character manifesting itself. That's what they saw.

They saw omniscience. They saw wisdom. They saw God's unchanging character.

They saw God's mercy. They saw His love. They saw His justice.

They saw His purity. And on and on we could go. They saw all this at once, shining out at them, emanating forth from the being of God, all this character, shining out, light coming their way, glorious light, shining unto them.

That's what they saw. That's way more than a pretty light, that we could stand and look at it and say, Wow, man, isn't that beautiful? Oh, look at that. No, they saw way more than a pretty light.

Yes, they saw light, that this is different light than any kind of light that man knows about. This light has holy character shining in it. And all of that came upon their hearts.

And the angels, Holy, Holy, Holy. And Isaiah, Woe is me. They saw God's holiness manifesting.

I know no other way to explain God's attribute of holiness than that. Theologians have wrestled with this word and with how to describe what it means for years. It is hard.

We are fallen creatures. How do you describe something that is so other than anything we are? We cannot understand this kind of perfect purity. Our whitest white is dingy gray in the light of God's white, white holiness.

It's dingy gray. Let me give you a definition of holiness. And I'm not going to give it to you on your list, but if you're smart, you'll write it down with those other words.

Holiness, the absolute, complete absence of sin and evil, plus the total presence of all of God's attributes. God's holiness is the absolute, complete absence of sin and evil, plus the total presence of all of God's attributes, all of His holy character. This is perfect purity, brethren, and total set-apartness.

This is who God is. The total absence of all evil, and the total presence of all of His character. That's who God is.

This is what the angels saw that made them cry out from their heart in heavenly adoration and rapture, holy, holy, holy. And this is what Isaiah saw that made him cry out from his heart in utter despair for his personal wickedness, Woe is me. It is said of Jesus Christ in Hebrews chapter 1, Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

Do you see the two? Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. That's holiness. Remember what the apostle John said in 1 John chapter 1? He said, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

We cannot understand that kind of light. This is a beautiful description of the holiness of God. God is light.

Pure, perfect, holy light. And in Him is no darkness at all. That's holiness.

God's holiness. Peter tells us that we have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. Amen.

Beautiful. And the apostle John again tells us in 1 John 1, 7, that if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. Because God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

God is Himself holy. He didn't get it from somewhere or somebody. It is, He is the all-holy One.

Just like He is the all-wise One, and the all-knowing One, He is the all-holy One. The word holy is used most times in the Bible as an adjective. It is a descriptive word.

This word is used far more than any other word to describe God or things related to God in all the Bible. Over 600 times in the scriptures you find the word holy or holiness. I found that very interesting.

To take God's attributes, mercy, justice, love, wisdom, knowledge, all of these that we have been looking at and we will look at, and plug them in to that searching in the computer, and see which words came out. And when I did that, this word holy is far above all the other words. In fact, I believe it canopies all of God's attributes.

Holy, holy, holy. It is the crowning adjective of His glorious person. Holy.

God is so holy that everything He touches becomes holy. Think about it. A piece of desert in the wilderness becomes holy ground, Moses.

Take off your shoes. Just a little piece of desert, some sand and dirt, and an old bramble bush. But when God goes to that place, all of a sudden it is holy ground.

The mountain becomes the holy mountain. And the room where God manifests His presence becomes the holy of holies. God's holiness compared to man is like comparing a lightning bug to the sun.

Can I say it that way? A lightning bug to the sun. Even the holy angels do not compare to God's bright white holiness, but must cover their faces, their glory in God's presence. Job 15.15 says, The heavens are not clean in His sight.

Job 25 says, The stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man that is a worm. Compared to a holy God.

A worm and God. And the prophetess Hannah, I keep stumbling on the words of this prophetess Hannah, said, There is none holy as the Lord. There is none holy like the Lord.

And Moses sang, Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness? After he saw the Lord part the Red Sea and bury the Egyptians in the bottom of it. Because God is all glorious, perfect, purity and righteousness, because He is this holy God, He of necessity must hate evil. It is a thing most contrary to His nature.

Think about it. He is more opposite to it than light is from darkness. We have learned that whatever God is, He is infinitely without limits.

So consider, since God is infinitely wise, He must of necessity hate folly. Since God is infinitely righteous, He must of necessity hate unrighteousness. Since God is infinitely clean and pure, He must of necessity hate uncleanness.

And all evil He doth infinitely hate. Because He is an infinite being. God's vehement hatred of evil is expressed in many different words in the Bible.

Many times God uses the word abomination as He speaks about evil. That brings us to one of our definitions. The word abhor.

Were you captivated by that word when you read it? Abhor? Listen to it. It means to hate exceedingly, to loathe and detest, to shiver and shake with extreme opposition, to abominate. Abhor.

Picture with me, the pure, clean, thrice holy God shivering and shaking with extreme opposition. That's what God means when He said to His people, It is an abomination to me. I tried to search for an illustration that could help us to see how utterly God abhors evil.

And I thought about a skunk. You know, the smell of a skunk is one of the strongest, most putrefying, gagging smells there are. Just imagine if I took that skunk with all of its smell and threw it in your lap right now.

What would you do with that putrid-smelling skunk? You would throw that thing away as fast as you could. You would abhor it! You would shake and shiver with extreme opposition. And I'm not giving that illustration to be funny.

That's how God sees sin. Because of His infinite holiness. God says about sin and evil, I hate, I detest, I despise.

God says, take it away from me! I will not hear! I will not smell! I cannot bear! These are the words that God uses as He pleads with His people through different of His prophets that He put His unction upon and caused them to speak His very heart. These were the words that God used to try to express to His people how He feels about sin. And He hasn't changed today.

Our brother was sharing his meditation this morning, his devotion time this morning. And I quick got my notes out and wrote it. Remember Ezra's response when he came to Jerusalem and found out that God's people had mixed their holy seed with the heathen.

Marrying heathen wives. Ezra is a beautiful picture of how God feels about evil. Remember what Ezra did? He plucked out the hair of his head and grabbed his beard and yanked out the hairs of his beard.

Now when you do that, your head bleeds and your face bleeds. And he sat astonished for half the day. God was grieving inside of that man Ezra because of the evil that was done.

That's how God feels about sin. We can see God's holiness in the way that He judged His most noble creatures. The angels which kept not their first estate.

The Bible says they were cast out of heaven and they are reserved in everlasting chains waiting for the final judgment. We see God's holiness in just that itself. Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 1 to hear the heart of God a bit here.

After God threw Isaiah the prophet, He shares His heart with His people and how He feels about their evil and what their evil is. I mean, He uses words like your sickness, your rottenness. He uses these words with them.

And all the while, while they're living in all of their evil, whatever their evils were, they're still going to church on Sunday. They're still carrying their Bible. They're still singing the songs.

They're still holding up the hands. They're still offering their sacrifices. They're still praising God.

They're still offering their incense. And God being infinite holiness, perfect purity, total absence of evil, and the total presence of all which is good and right and holy, God being that, He couldn't bear it anymore. And He says in verse 13 of chapter 1, Bring no more vain, empty oblations.

Incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of the assemblies, I cannot away with. It is iniquity.

Even the solemn meeting, your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. Hear those words. They are a trouble unto Me, says God.

I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.

Your hands are full of blood. But God doesn't stop there. And He never does, see.

He always reaches out in mercy. And so He goes on to say to them, Wash you and make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.

Cease to do evil. That's the negative side. But He doesn't stop there.

Remember? Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed.

Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widows. Do you see how God is viewing them? Not just the absence of evil, but the presence of that which is right in the heart of God.

The heart of God. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.

Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Here we see both sides of His holiness. A life free from sin.

And a life filled with righteousness. Isn't that beautiful? And He clearly shows the way to make it so. By the blood.

The blood of the everlasting covenant. We can surely make it so. A life free from sin.

And a life filled with righteousness. Let's turn a little bit to the positive side. Because God is infinite holiness, He cannot but love holiness in others.

His affections flow toward all creatures that bear His resemblance. He loves righteousness wherever He beholds it. Psalm 11 verse 7 says, The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.

I love that verse. Isn't that beautiful? The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. So we see God's heart here.

In Ezekiel chapter 36, in verse 22, God again is sharing His heart with His people through Ezekiel the prophet. He's telling them what He's going to do. He's speaking prophetic promises into the future.

He's speaking promises of the new covenant and the gospel of Jesus Christ. But here is heart concerning the positive side of a holy life. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whether ye went.

My holy name has been profaned among the heathen. How? Because name and character go together. And they were using His holy name, but living a life totally opposite in character.

And God said, You are profaning My holy name. But then look at what He says on the positive side in verse 23. I will sanctify My great name.

I'm going to make My name holy. I'm jealous over My holy name. And I'm going to make My name holy.

How? I will sanctify My great name which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them. And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. Yes, a righteous Lord loveth righteousness.

He loveth righteousness. And He has made all the provision to bring it to pass. Remember we said a couple of days ago, you want wisdom? Study in the Word of God how God makes man righteous.

Because I'm telling you, brethren, that's what God is after. Righteousness. In you and I. They shall know who I am when I am sanctified in you before their eyes.

Isn't that beautiful? A couple of applications. Have you gazed upon the Holy One lately? Have you gazed upon the fiery One? The awesome, terrible One? The high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy? Have you gazed upon Him lately? Have you ever sensed that overwhelming crushing that Isaiah sensed where you can do nothing but weep and moan and groan and mourn? Jesus said, Blessed are they that mourn. How long since you mourned? It was clearly recorded of Bishop Usher.

That's the man that wrote that big thick book there on ancient history. He was the Archbishop, the overseer of the Church of England in 1600s. They said of Bishop Usher, he spent every Saturday alone by a river in the quiet confessing and repenting of the needs in his life.

Every Saturday he did that. They also said of Bishop Usher, he was a very holy man. We might look at it at first and say, oh my, he must have been a very unholy man if he had to go to the river every Saturday and spend the whole day.

But maybe at second thought we might say, maybe we don't understand what holiness is and maybe we don't understand what the all-searching eye of the Holy One is. And maybe Bishop Usher did know what that all-searching eye of the Holy One was all about. And maybe he knew something of humility and brokenness that we know nothing of.

Have you ever found yourself on your face broken and weeping over the needs in your life? Blessed art thou if God has brought you to such a place on your face. Blessed art thou. God has gifted you beautifully.

We do not see God like this. We have to acknowledge it. We come to a holy God with our tainted souls and falsely trust in the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Oh, us American Christians, we love the imputed righteousness of Christ. We come before a holy God with a tainted soul falsely, unwisely trusting in the imputed righteousness of Christ. It is not right, brethren.

It is not right. The preachers tell the people today, Jesus will help you. Come and ask Jesus into your hearts.

Jesus will make it all better. Come to Jesus, my friend. Nobody tells the people anymore, we have sinned against a holy God.

And what am I going to do if He doesn't pardon me? What a different way to come to a holy God. I think we have lost the vision of a holy God. And now we flippantly come into God's presence and quickly say, Imputed righteousness! Imputed righteousness! I do believe in imputed righteousness, but, my brethren, imputed righteousness is given when I am in the dust, on my face, and I see who I am! It is not when I flippantly come before God with a tainted soul, it is not imputed.

It is repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In closing, this verse, which we have looked at many times, but hear it again this morning. Isaiah 57, 15 Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is Holy.

I dwell in the high and holy place. Amen, Lord. Amen.

With Him also, I also dwell with Him who is perfect, who is pure like me, who has all righteousness. No, that is not what he said. With Him also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

All you have to be is honest. That is all. To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

The awesome knowledge of the holy requires that we be honest, that we be honest. May God help us to be honest. Let's pray.

Oh Lord, would you bless us like this, Lord? Oh Lord, would you bless me like this, Lord? Baptize us, Father, with the spirit of honesty. Oh Lord, as we enter in to this fasting and prayer time, Lord, baptize us all with honesty. Yes, Lord, that we truly may see a manifestation of your holy presence.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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