

## **Holy, Holy, Holy**

By Betty Harstad

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: The whole world is full of His glory.”*  
(Isaiah 6:3 ESV)

*“Holy, holy, holy to the Lord God almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”*  
(Revelation 4:8b)

Holiness is the only attribute of God that is repeated **three** times, and all are of utmost importance. In the Hebrew language, intensity is communicated by repetition, so this indicates that the holiness of God should be held in awe by us. When God chose to show His holiness to Isaiah by way of a vision (Isaiah 6:1-4), the searing light of God on His throne, above the heavens and earth, brought him to reverence and repentance.

*“And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of Him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts! Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for’”* (Isaiah 6:4-7).

In the eyes of man, Isaiah was considered righteous by all outward appearances, but when he caught a glimpse of God’s glory, the comparison revealed him as a woeful sinner. Isaiah was deeply changed by God, as he became willing to write and speak as God’s Prophet to a largely disobedient people. He was not highly esteemed by most of Israel even though his writings bring out exhortation and comfort in-between the warnings of doom and destruction because of the judgment against sin. Even so, his prophecies concerning the Messiah caused many to look forward to the promise of His Coming, though much of it may have been misunderstood during that time until the salvation plan and purpose unfolded on earth.

Consider Simeon and Anna to whom God revealed that the Baby Jesus was the Christ. Simeon declared, *“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel”* (Luke 2:29-32). As for Anna, *“she did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”* (Luke 2:37b-38).

Simeon and Anna were wise to be often in the temple listening to the reading of the Word that often expounded upon the holiness of God, which in turn revealed their own sinfulness and need of a Messiah. Surely they did not know exactly how God would prepare the needed righteousness for them through the Messiah, but they probably had heard the words from Isaiah 53:11-12: *“Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied, by His knowledge shall the righteous one, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities, Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”* How awesome it was that this ordinary man and ordinary woman recognized the Messiah even as a baby. It was because of their genuine faith in the promises and prophecies concerning salvation that God

chose to reveal the Christ to these Believers.

On this side of the Cross, Paul writes, *“For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one, no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have sinned and have become worthless; no one does good, not even one’”* (Romans 3:9b-10). We can be offended by these words, which were also written in Psalms 14:1-3, or we can think reverently upon them and so rightly compare ourselves to God Who is holy, holy, holy! Could we ever boast that we have been obeying the whole law and so think that we have no need of a Savior? *“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it”* (James 2:10).

Paul declares in Romans: *“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins”* (Romans 3:19-25), *“for if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness’”* (Romans 4:2-3). We need perfect righteousness imputed to us *“in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Romans 8:4). God prepared men to write several other epistles to further explain the scope of God’s perfect eternal plan for all humanity. The Book of Romans is very important as it is foundational and so explanatory concerning the Gospel, but we have need of every chapter and book that God inspired men to write to help us maneuver our path on earth and beyond. We, who have been brought near by the blood of Christ, have the Holy Spirit to bring the Word to life for us. Ephesians 2:18-22 says, *“For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”*

To understand God’s Holiness, we need to come to terms with our sinfulness. We need to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ that makes us Holy because He is Holy. Let us be strengthened by God as Paul’s doxology in chapter 16 of Romans says: *“Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen”* (Romans 16:25-27).