

The Holiness of God

I Am the Lord, There Is No Other

Main text: Isaiah 46:1–13 (NLT) · Assistant Pastor Jireh Jimenez

Scripture quotations from the NLT, ESV, NKJV, AMP, CSB, and GW, as marked.

OPENING

There Is Only One Who Is Holy

In a world full of man-made gods, there is only one who is Holy.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we come before You today and we simply declare that You are Holy. We declare today that only You are the Lord, and there is no other like You.

Scripture reading

¹Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, bow as they are lowered to the ground. They are being hauled away on ox carts. The poor beasts stagger under the weight. ²Both the idols and their owners are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together. ³Listen to me, descendants of Jacob, all you who remain in Israel. **I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you before you were born.** ⁴I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you. ⁵**To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?** ⁶Some people pour out their silver and gold and hire a craftsman to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it! ⁷They carry it around on their shoulders, and when they set it down, it stays there. It can't even move! **And when someone prays to it, there is no answer.** It can't rescue anyone from trouble. ⁸**Do not forget this! Keep it in mind! Remember this, you guilty ones.** ⁹Remember the things I have done in the past. **For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.** ¹⁰Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. ¹¹I will call a swift bird of prey from the east—a leader from a distant land to come and do my bidding. I have said what I would do, and I will do it. ¹²Listen to me, you stubborn people who are so far from doing right. ¹³For I am ready to set things right, not in the distant future, but right now! I am ready to save Jerusalem and show my glory to Israel.”

ISAIAH 46:1–13 (NLT)

INTRODUCTION

Growing Up with a Holy God

If I am thankful for anything, I am thankful that my mom and dad taught me growing up that **God is Holy**. I remember my mom praying at 2:30 in the morning, crying out to God that **He alone is Holy**. If she wasn't speaking in tongues and shaking the walls, she was telling the Lord that He is Holy.

As a young boy I learned that if I didn't know how or what to pray, I could simply echo the Lord's Prayer:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

MATTHEW 6:9

In other words: **Holy is Your name**. As a young adult, my youth pastor taught me that **before God is anything** (before He is good, before He is loving, before He is anything else we care to think of) **He is Holy**.

As churchgoers we become numb to church lingo. We say "Praise the Lord." We say "In Jesus' name." We say "Worship Him." And we say "He's Holy." But have we ever stopped to think about what we are really saying? What does it actually mean to say, and to sing on Sunday, that God is Holy?

THE QUESTION

What Do We Mean When We Say God Is Holy?

A lot of us have learned that "God is Holy" means He is **righteous**. Or that He is **without sin**. Or that He is **morally pure**. All of this is true. But could I suggest that when we say God is Holy, we are simply saying **God is Other**?

When we say He is Holy and recognize the "Otherness of God," we are saying that in the grand scheme of options and multiple choices in our Americanized culture, God alone is so different in His nature and so different in His being that there is literally no word that can describe Him except that **He is Holy**.

We are so used to having options, a whole pool of choices:

- We go to Chipotle: brown or white rice? Black or pinto beans? Chicken or steak? And then they sprinkle the chicken on your bowl.
- We race home with our takeout, sit on the couch, and turn on Hulu, and Netflix, and Disney Plus, and every other subscription we have. After 15 minutes of searching we give up and watch TikTok, because "there was nothing to watch."

CORE IDEA

The holiness of God means He is set apart, distinct, and unlike the common. When Scripture speaks of the holiness of God, it points to His absolute otherness.

In other words, when we say God is Holy, we are saying **no one and nothing can compare to Him**.

A multiple-choice question: “How would you best describe God?”

This is a lofty and mind-bending concept, so here is a way to picture it. Imagine a multiple-choice question in front of you.

OPTION A God is all-powerful. <i>“Is anything too hard for the LORD?”</i> GENESIS 18:14 (ESV) Yes, He is. A good answer.	OPTION B God is loving. <i>“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”</i> JOHN 3:16 (NKJV) Yes, again, He is. A good answer.	OPTION C God is Other _____. <i>“To whom, then, can you compare God?”</i> ISAIAH 40:18 The most accurate answer.
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Options A and B are very good and truthful answers, but the most accurate answer is that God is **Other, fill in the blank**. There is no single word and no single phrase you can come up with to describe who He is. Maybe the only word we can come to, in complete humility, is that **He is Holy**.

Is there any song? Any book? Any piece of art that can truly describe who He is? The answer, simply, is **no**. There is no one like Him. No one and nothing can compare to Him, and that is why we call Him Holy.

THE PROBLEM

Why Declaring God's Holiness Is Hard for Us

In today's godless society, the idea that a being could be elevated beyond our own selfish ambitions is sometimes too much for the American mind to comprehend. Some of us have never served and sacrificed for a purpose beyond ourselves, and in turn we have exchanged the beauty of His holiness to feed our narcissistic egos and prideful desires. We are living in a 2 Timothy society:

*“People will be selfish and love money. They will brag, be arrogant, and use abusive language. They will curse their parents, show no gratitude, **have no respect for what is holy.**”*

2 TIMOTHY 3:2 (GW)

Declaring the holiness of God is hard for a lot of people because **we've made ourselves our own gods in our own story**.

- Instead of recognizing that **God is our Provider**, we look at our small businesses and careers as personal empires, things we built in our own strength.
- Instead of recognizing that **God is our Savior**, we've created our own savior complexes, convincing ourselves that everything in our lives was a direct result of our own efforts.

PERSPECTIVE

You Are Not as Important as You Think You Are

Our society is obsessed with individuality: with our fingerprints and snowflakes and how every individual is unique. We are so obsessed with our accomplishments and accolades that we forget how small we really are.

I can guarantee you today, my friend, that you are not as important as you think you are.

*"In fact, **the nations are like a drop from a bucket**, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales..."*

ISAIAH 40:15 (AMP)

You think you're important in this world? To God, the nations of this world are a drop in the bucket, so small that He compares them to a speck of dust on a scale.

*"Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! **For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.**"*

JAMES 4:14 (CSB)

Some perspective

Most scientists estimate that the universe is about 13.8 billion years old, that planet Earth is about 4.54 billion years old, and that humans have only been around for about 200,000 years. Stretch out your arms. If your entire wingspan represented the whole geological history of planet Earth, and you took a nail file and nudged off just a tiny bit of your fingernail, you would have just wiped out Earth's entire human history.

The Pale Blue Dot

There is a picture of Earth taken by Voyager 1 that really puts things into perspective. Carl Sagan, a famous astronomer and religious skeptic, wrote about that photo. Even though he didn't believe in God, I believe God used his writing to describe the awe and wonder of who God is: everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you have ever heard of, every human being who ever lived. All of them lived out their entire lives on that one tiny speck.

So here we are, on this pale blue dot we call home. Tiny specks of dust in time and space. Here for a few moments, then gone, like a vapor in the wind. The things in this life are all **meaningless in the grand scheme of things**:

- Our titles and positions
- Our talents and accomplishments
- Our bank accounts and retirement accounts
- Our student loans and credit card debt
- Our mortgages and taxes
- The families and legacies we've spent our time and energy to build

Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, put it this way:

*"I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a **tragic existence to the human race**. I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, **it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.**"*

ECCLESIASTES 1:13–14 (NLT)

Solomon discovers that we live in a world where people work their entire lives and then die; generations come and generations go; wise people die just like fools; righteous people sometimes suffer while wicked people prosper; accomplishments are eventually forgotten; and nothing in creation finally satisfies the human soul. That's why he says it is all meaningless, like chasing the wind.

So the question is: **what are you so worried about?** What is stressing you out? Because it is all going to the dirt, like everything and everyone else.

THE REVELATION

The moment you realize that, in the grand scheme of things, you are a meaningless speck of dust, and that everything in your life is a mere chasing of the wind, then and only then will you get the revelation of the Holiness of God.

THE CONTRAST

This Is the Holiness of God

He is **not simply a greater version of man**. He is not just someone with more power. He is not just a person with more knowledge. He is not someone with a longer lifespan. He is altogether Other. **He is altogether Holy.**

WE ARE	HE IS
We are vapor	He is eternal
We are created	He is Creator
We are dependent	He is self-existent
We are finite	He is infinite
We see a moment	He sees the end from the beginning
We are meaningless	He is the One who brings meaning into the meaningless

Describing the Otherness of God is an impossible task. But we are going to try.

POINT ONE

We Are Temporary, but God Is Eternal

*"For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, **who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy**: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"*

ISAIAH 57:15 (ESV)

If there is one thing you have to realize about the Otherness of God, it is that **God is eternal**. It is very easy to say God is eternal. It is very hard to comprehend, because we live in the context of **time**. Every single day, our decisions and choices are dictated by time:

- We go to sleep with an alarm set to wake us up.
- When we wake up, we have to be at work at a certain time.
- When we get to work, we have a scheduled Zoom meeting, then a 30-minute lunch.
- Don't forget the kids and nap time at 12 o'clock.
- When work is done, we have to beat the traffic home.
- At home we preheat the oven and set a timer for dinner.
- After dinner we have to be at United Group by 7 PM.
- And we want enough sleep, so we try to get home at a certain time, brush our teeth, swish some Listerine, and call it a day.

Time, time, time. We are dictated by time. But God is **not dictated by time**. God does not make decisions according to a set schedule. He does not make His choices according to our Google Calendars.

Why? Because God has **always existed**, and He will **continue to exist**. He existed before time began, and He will exist for all of eternity. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last (Revelation 22:13; Isaiah 44:6). He doesn't need you to tell Him He's late. **He is always on time.**

*"Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. **They will perish, but you will remain**; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but **you are the same, and your years have no end.**"*

PSALM 102:25-27 (ESV)

Are you worried about the years passing you by? Worried about the future? Worried about next week's paycheck and bills? The majority of our problems and anxiety come from **not knowing what tomorrow will bring**, because we are creatures who are here one moment and gone the next.

But God does not share your limitation of being temporary. He does not exist in space and time. He is not finite like we are finite. He is **infinite** in His very nature.

- So infinite that while you are worried about what tomorrow will bring, **He already exists in tomorrow.**
- So infinite and eternal that while I wonder how this story is going to end, **He declares the end from the beginning.**

*"...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, **declaring the end from the beginning** and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose.**'"*

ISAIAH 46:9-10 (ESV)

POINT ONE

He is Holy because He is eternal.

POINT TWO

We Are Created, but He Is Creator

*"To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: **who created these?** He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing."*

ISAIAH 40:25–26 (ESV)

One of the most mind-bending characteristics of God is that **He was not created**. And because God was not created, only one thing can remain true: **God is Creator**. You and I serve a God who is the Creator of all things, from the atoms that make up our skin and bones to the hundreds of billions of galaxies that make up our universe.

He is Creator in the sense that whenever He speaks, **all of creation must obey** the command of His spoken word. Every atom, every particle, every force of nature and physics must move at the sound of His voice. In the beginning God said, "Let there be light," and light came forth.

We serve the Creator of you and me: the Creator of humanity, the Creator of our existence. But when God created humanity, He did not just speak us into existence like He did with light. **He is a lot more intimate than that**. He knelt down into the dirt, into the dust, and **breathed the very ruach, the very breath of God, into humanity**, and made us a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

*"The Spirit of God has made me, and **the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**"*

JOB 33:4 (ESV)

You are not alive today because God just happened to speak you into existence. You exist today because **God took the time to breathe His Spirit into your lungs**. That is why we sing "Great Are You Lord": the breath we praise Him with is the breath He gave us.

We are created, but He is Creator. And because He is the Creator of all things, **He deserves all of my worship and all of my praise**. This is why God is Holy. This is why the Otherness of God stands true: when we say He is Creator, we are saying **He is Holy**.

*"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for **you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.**"*

REVELATION 4:11 (ESV)

POINT TWO

God is Holy because He is eternal. He is Holy because He is Creator.

POINT THREE

We Are Meaningless, but He Is YHWH

*"Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, **for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.**"*

ECCLESIASTES 5:2 (ESV)

The name

In Exodus 3, God commissions Moses to set His people free from Egypt. Moses asks God what to tell the people of Israel His name is when they ask who sent him.

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you."'"

EXODUS 3:14 (ESV)

God responds: tell them YAHWEH (YHWH) sent you. It translates to "**I WILL BE," or "I AM."** Essentially, this means that God just is. **God just IS.** This is the Otherness of God.

The name no one would say

Moses could not say "I AM sent me," but rather that Yahweh had sent him.

- Over the years, in honor of the sacred name, Jewish tradition avoided pronouncing it aloud. They used a visual device so that whenever someone read the Hebrew Old Testament, no one would accidentally say the sacred name of God.
- When the Bible was translated into English, YHWH was rendered in all capitals: **LORD** or **GOD**.
- No one knew the correct pronunciation of YHWH for all of human history, **until Jesus Christ Himself entered the picture.**

Jesus says the name

In John 8, the religious leaders are arguing with Jesus, and they don't even know His name. They ask Him, "Who are you?" And to their surprise, Jesus responds:

*"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am.**' So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple."*

JOHN 8:58–59 (ESV)

Jesus correctly pronounces His own name, YHWH. He reveals to them that **He is Yahweh Himself, incarnate.** The religious people go nuts and try to kill Him, because Jesus attributes the sacred name of YHWH to Himself.

When they asked Jesus, "Are you greater than Abraham?" and He answered that He was the I AM, what He was really saying was: *My name is Jesus, and...*

I AM the fire that was burning in the bush with Moses.

I AM the one who was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

I AM the one who was with Daniel in the lions' den.

I AM the one who split the Red Sea for my people.

I AM the one who is eternal; before time existed, I AM.

I AM the one who created the universe and created humanity.

I AM the I AM, and my name is JESUS.

There will come a day when your time is up on this earth. There will come a day when all of your accomplishments and accolades will be meaningless. But even though we will wither and toil, **Jesus will**

continue to be Yahweh. Jesus will continue to be the I AM. Jesus will continue to be Holy. He will be the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). This world will one day pass, but His word shall remain forever (Matthew 24:35).

POINT THREE

If you haven't gotten it by now: God alone is Holy, because He is the I AM THAT I AM.

He is Holy because there is no one who can compare to Him. There is no one who can even come close to Him. That is why He says, **"I am the LORD, and there is no other."** He is Holy!

CLOSING

What Is Man, That You Are Mindful of Him?

*"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **what is man that you are mindful of him**, and the son of man that you care for him?"*

PSALM 8:3-4 (ESV)

Considering the fact that we are just vapor. A meaningless chasing of the wind. A speck of dust in time and space. A drop in the bucket. King David asks the question: **What is man, what is this meaningless speck of dust, that You are mindful of him?**

Back to our opening verse in Isaiah 46. The Lord is watching the idols of Babylon. He is watching these idols get buried into the ground. God is seeing them bow, while the people try to worship them. And after this scene, God reminds His people that even though they have made idols and gods in His place, **He always has been and always will be with them.**

*"I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. **I will carry you along and save you.**"*

ISAIAH 46:3-4 (NLT)

All of the idols in our lives (our egos, our empires, our savior complexes) have to be carried by us, and cannot carry us. **Only the Holy One carries His people.**

OUR DECLARATION

Lord, You are Holy.

Only You are the Lord, and there is no other like You.

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