

God High and Holy

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Pastor E. Keith Hassell

Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV) “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”

This generation does not know the LORD. We no longer see Him seated on His throne and ruling sovereignly over all things. We no longer imagine that we will one day stand before Him to give account of our lives. We have lowered God to our level. We treat Him in ways that are unbecoming of a King. We have lost a high view of God. As a result, we have lost the fear of the LORD. Regarding Israel, God declared, “*Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!*”¹

It has become all too common to hear people blaspheme and mock God without any sense of fear. We disregard and disobey His commandments and undermine His principles. We live in open sin and defend it as right and good. Those who dare to stand true to God’s Word are regarded as intolerant bigots. We imagine that God has “matured” with the times. We emphasize the love of God without any mention of the fear of God. We do not realize that we are on our way to hell while believing that we are on our way to heaven. Cultural Christians talk and live like the world rather than like Christ. Why has this happened? It is because we no longer know the God of the Bible. Because we do not know Him, we do not fear Him. We imagine that God is like us. We have made God in our own image and likeness.

Has God changed His mind about sin and righteousness? He says in Malachi 3:6, “*For I am the LORD; I do not change.*” Men change, cultures change, societies change, but God never changes. He is forever holy and we are not. Unless we return to a high and holy view of God, we will imagine that God has changed. We will not know Him as He really is.

God says to the wicked: “*But to the wicked God says: ‘What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, ¹⁷ Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? ¹⁸ When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. ¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. ²⁰ You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. ²¹ These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes. ²² Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: ²³ Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.’”²*

The reality is that people do not *fear* the LORD because they do not *know* the LORD. John the apostle said, “*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*”³ To know God is to love Him and to love Him is to fear Him.

What is the fear of the LORD? The fear of the LORD is the proper holy response of those who see Him in His majesty and acknowledge Him as the sovereign Creator God and the Judge of all. The fear of the LORD is clean and is the beginning of divine knowledge and wisdom. The fear of the LORD leads a person to tremble at His word, to hate evil, to depart from sin, to love what is good, to honor Him in full allegiance, to sit at His feet to learn of Him, and to do what is right in His sight as one who will give account to Him.

Much of the absence of the fear of the LORD is the fault of the pulpit. We have not preached a high view of God. We have preached a low view of God that brings God down to our level. The result is that people now imagine that it is cool to refer to God in slang terms such as the Big Man Upstairs or Papa Daddy God. Will this be the way we will address Him on the day that we stand before Him? Paul warns believers to be prepared for that day: “*For we*

¹ Deuteronomy 5:29 (NKJV)

² Psalm 50:16–23 (NKJV)

³ 1 John 2:3–4 (NKJV)

must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."⁴

Much of the irreverence we see toward the LORD today is due to a failure to distinguish between the transcendence of God and the immanence of God. The God of the Old Testament was portrayed as transcendent, God High and Holy. He is not like us. He is holy. As such, He is to be honored, revered, and obeyed as the supreme and sovereign King that He is. In the New Testament, God became a Man in the Person of Jesus Christ. God became immanent as Jesus meek and lowly in order to save us. Yet Jesus, as a Man, did not lose His transcendence. He is still God High and Holy. One day we will stand before Him and give account. If we do not know Him in His transcendence, then we will fail to relate reverentially to Him in His immanence. Yes, God is our Father but He is still God. Jesus taught us to pray, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*"⁵ Jesus became a Man, but He is still God. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Read the apostle John's description of Jesus in the Book of Revelation and you will see that the Jesus he encountered in heaven is to be feared. In His immanence Jesus is the Lamb, but in His transcendence, He is the Lion!

From the beginning of time, God revealed Himself as transcendent. For instance, He revealed Himself to Abram as *God Most High* (El Elyon), the Possessor of heaven and earth.⁶ As God Most High, He is exalted above all others.

God revealed Himself to Moses as YAHWEH (commonly rendered in English translations as LORD). He is also identified as YAHWEH Elohim (The LORD God). As such, He is not like other gods. He is not simply God. He is YAHWEH God. As YAHWEH, He reveals His distinctive attributes throughout Scripture that make Him holy (set apart). We cannot know Him apart from the revelation He has given us in His Word. As such, He is to be feared.

Let us look at what Isaiah says about the LORD. He calls Him the *High and Lofty One*. This speaks of His transcendence. He says that the LORD inhabits *eternity*. He is eternal. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is without beginning or ending. Isaiah declares that the LORD *inhabits* eternity. He is not the I WAS or the I WILL BE. He is I AM (YAHWEH). He is *omnipresent*, meaning that He is simultaneously present everywhere in the past, present, and future realms of time. He is neither contained in time nor limited by time.

Isaiah declares that the name of the LORD is *holy*. This means that His name is set apart from all other names. To use His name in a vulgar way or to lower it in dishonor is to desecrate His name. When we call ourselves by His name and then live in an unworthy manner, we desecrate His name before others.

Isaiah declare that the LORD dwells in the *high* and *holy* place. In His transcendence He dwells in the high and holy place of heaven. In His immanence He dwells with him who has a contrite and humble heart. He will revive the heart of the contrite ones. Such is His mercy and grace!

There are two significant encounters with the LORD God of heaven revealed in Scripture. One is found in Isaiah 6:1-10 where Isaiah saw the LORD high and lifted up. This encounter with the LORD left him undone and forever changed. No one can meet the LORD in His transcendence and be the same. The second is found in Revelation 4:2-11. As mentioned earlier, John the apostle, who had walked with Jesus in His immanence on earth encountered this same Jesus in His transcendence in heaven. He too was forever changed.

Are you ready to meet God high and holy? Do you have the fear of God? Look upon God high and holy. Humble yourself before Him and worship at His footstool. To know Him is to love Him and to love Him is to fear Him.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:10–11 (NKJV)

⁵ Matthew 6:9 (NKJV)

⁶ Genesis 14:18-20