

## The Theology of Isaiah #3: Titles of God

The book of Isaiah is one of the most comprehensive books of the Bible in revealing who God is, who we are, what he expects of us, his relationship with the nations, how he works in redeeming a people to himself, and even what shall take place in the distant future. In fact, if the only book we had was Isaiah, our knowledge of God could be quite remarkable.

Besides God's names (El, Elohim, Adonai, Yahveh, Yah), he has titles, and very many descriptions. The distinction between a title and a description may be a bit vague, but his titles are specific words or phrases used repeatedly.

### The Holy One of Israel

God calls himself the Holy One at least 29 times in Isaiah – almost always “the Holy One of Israel”, but once “the Holy One of Jacob”, and several times simply “the Holy One”. Besides this there are many references to his holiness, like in 6:3 where the seraphim around the throne cry “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts”. In fact, this title is so frequent as to consider his holiness to be his chief attribute.

12:6 – “Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

47:4 – “As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.”

6:3 (Isaiah's vision of the LORD on his throne, with seraphim above) – “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” Note Isaiah's response in v. 5.

All of this is to stress God's holiness, but it is significant that he doesn't usually refer to himself as just “the Holy One”, but as “the Holy One of Israel”. There is a triple meaning:

- a) He is the one who is Holy,
- b) He is the One and only God, “the Holy One” (Dt. 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD”), and
- c) He is in a special way the God of a people whom he has chosen. He is God of the whole earth, but by a relationship of calling and election, he is the God of Israel (also seen in Dt. 6:4 – he is “our God”),

The Hebrew words are qadash (“to be holy”), or qadosh (holy as an adjective). The base meaning is “to be separate”. They can be applied to places, physical items, sacrifices, days, houses, fields, people, etc. In such cases it means that the referenced object has been set apart, or consecrated to God, and is not to be used for common or profane purposes.

**But what does it mean to say that God is “Holy”?** For God himself it means he is completely distinct from, above, and “other than”, all his creation, and cannot tolerate any form of sin or corruption.

“... the word signifies everything about God that sets him apart from us and makes him an object of awe, adoration, and dread to us. It covers all aspects of his transcendent greatness and moral perfection and thus is an attribute of all his attributes ... Every facet of God's nature and every aspect of his character may be properly be spoken of as holy, just because it is his. The core of the concept, however, is God's purity, which cannot tolerate any form of sin ...” - from Concise Theology by J. I. Packer, published by Crossway 2020, pp. 61-62

Isa. 5:16 – “But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.” The Hebrew words for sanctified [niqdash] and holy [haqqadosh] are from the same root (qadash), but are then tightly linked with righteousness. Holiness, sanctification, and righteousness go together.

### Application (How does God's Holiness affect us?)

We are told elsewhere, “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2), and “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 P. 1:15-16). Isaiah's constant reminder of God's holiness is meant to inspire awe and fear in us, but it should also motivate us to be holy also – to live lives that are consecrated to God instead of the common and profane, and that we should be separate from all that is sinful and defiling. We should live in righteousness.

Isa. 1:16 – “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil”

## The Almighty, or The Mighty One of Israel

This title stresses God's omnipotent power, that nothing is too difficult for him.

He is called "the mighty One of Israel" (eg, 1:24, 30:29), "the mighty God" (9:6, 10:21), "the mighty One of Jacob" (49:26), or simply "the Almighty" (13:6).

It is interesting that El Shaddai is a name of God that occurs outside of Isaiah (e.g. Gen. 17:1, translated as "the Almighty God"). But in Isaiah 13:6 the word shaddai is used by itself as a title, "the Almighty".

A. W. Pink quotes Stephen Charnock, a Puritan from the 1600's:

"The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve."

- from The Attributes of God by Arthur W. Pink, published by Naker Books 1975, p. 58

God is the Almighty by the fact that he is the great Creator. He who created all can have no limits on his will or sovereign disposition of that creation. By virtue of his being the Author of creation, nothing can be too hard for him, and nothing can put him under restraint or obligation. But his might is often spoken of in reference to his people – He is the mighty One of Israel, and his might is shown in his salvation and redemption. God is "mighty to save" (Zeph. 3:17). He is "thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. 49:26).

Not only is he personally omnipotent, but all earthly power derives from God, even in those who do not realize it. He wields all power in history and the governments of men, even though they are ignorant of it. He has the power of life (our breath is in his hand), and he has the power of death. He sets men in power, and he takes them down, according to his will alone.

Isa. 10:5-15 describes the Assyrians as the rod of God's anger against Israel, and yet they would boast in their own supposed power. But he said when he was finished using the Assyrians for his own purpose, he would judge the them in their turn. In other places he makes the same point of the Babylonians.

Also in 44:28-45:4, he predicts the rise of a king Cyrus who would be used to deliver his people from the Babylonian captivity, and decree the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, "though thou hast not known me". This shows that though Cyrus was a great king, his power was really given, and his actions directed, by God. That is also the lesson of king Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation in Dan. 4.

### Application (How does God's Power and Might affect us?)

- We should see that God is our strength and salvation.
  - 12:2 – "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH [*Yahveh*] is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."
  - 41:10 – "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed' for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of me righteousness."
- He gives us strength to endure the hard times of life.
  - 25:4 – "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."
- This strength comes by trusting God and believing him, and waiting upon him in quiet confidence.
  - 26:4 – "Trust ye in the LORD for ever; for in the LORD JEHOVAH [*Yahveh*] is everlasting strength."
  - 30:15 – "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved: in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not."
  - 33:6 – "And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure."
  - 40:29-31 – "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. ... But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."