



Holy, Holy, Holy



**"Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!**

**"Holy, holy holy! All the saints adore Thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
which, wert and art and evermore shalt be.**

**"Holy holy, holy! Tho the darkness hide Thee,
Tho the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy - there is none beside Thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.**

**"Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!"**

**"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care."
- Psalm 95:6-7**

"Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." - Leviticus 19:2

"Holy, holy holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." - Revelation 4:8

"O Lord, grant that I may desire Thee, and desiring Thee, seek Thee, and seeking Thee, find Thee, and finding Thee, be satisfied forever." - Augustine

Today's classic hymn is a powerful expression of our worship. I have accompanied congregations many times over the years as Christians joyously sang these words of praise to our holy God. I'd never realized until I typed the lyrics how many exclamation points there are throughout the hymn, and rightfully so!

The clear message points us to that day when all believers will proclaim their worship of the Trinity in heaven, along with the cherubim and seraphim. As glorious as the sound of God's children singing His praises can be here on earth, it will pale in comparison to the exuberant joy of that heavenly scene!

"Holy, Holy, Holy" was written in 1827 by Reginald Heber, an English Anglican bishop, poet, and writer of hymns. After 16 years as a country parson, Reginald served as Bishop of Calcutta until his death at the age of 42. His wife later published 57 of his hymns as a tribute, with help from some of his many friends. The English Poet Laureate, Alfred Tennyson, considered "Holy, Holy, Holy" to be one of the finest hymns ever written. I would certainly agree, and the Nicaea tune fits perfectly.

In Isaiah 6:1, we read of the prophet's amazing vision of the Lord "sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." The throne was elevated to emphasize the Most High God in all His holiness.

Isaiah then describes the Seraphim who stood above Him, "each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet and with two he flew." They dared not gaze directly at God's glory, but they called to each other in antiphonal praise to the Triune God, saying, "Holy, Holy Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." (v. 3)

The foundations of the thresholds trembled, as the temple filled with smoke, symbolizing God's holiness in His wrath and judgment. Isaiah became painfully aware of his sin, crying, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

God had shown Isaiah this heavenly vision to prepare him for the work He had for him to do. One of the seraphim flew to him and touched Isaiah's mouth with a hot coal - an emblem of God's purifying work. Repentance is painful, but necessary for cleansing from our sin. When God asked, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah was ready to respond, "Here I am, send me."

The mission that Isaiah signed up for would be difficult, for God's people would not heed his message. At times we find ourselves in frustrating circumstances too, where all we can do is ask the Lord to cleanse our own heart and enable us to serve Him faithfully and represent Him well. It helps at those times to rehearse in our minds God's many glorious attributes listed for us by Bishop Heber, remembering above all that we serve a living God who is "perfect in power, in love and purity."