

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

### EZEKIEL 1

Many centuries ago, some of the early church fathers considered God's holiness and discussed the ineffable, indescribable nature of God.<sup>1</sup> Since God is set apart from all of creation, we cannot fully understand or explain God. Have you ever tried to explain God to a three year old child? Much of the language that we use to describe God is a smokescreen which hides the fact that we can only understand a little of the totality of God. God is holy; he is set apart from the rest of creation by his very nature as creator. The only way that we know anything about God is when he reveals it to us.

Ezekiel saw a mysterious vision of God, which is recorded in the first chapter of the book bearing his name. The strange imagery used in this chapter speaks of God's set-apartness, his holiness. These images all carry a sense of otherworldliness and mystery. It was difficult for Ezekiel and other prophets who beheld these visions to put into words what they had witness - that's another indication of the holiness of God. If God is set apart from creation, how can part of his creation hope to understand God when they behold him? Once, when Moses asked to see God, God told him that no one can see God and live (Exodus 33:18-20). As part of creation, we are therefore powerless to know God on our own accord. We only know God through God's revelation.

We live in a world in which knowledge is power. When you know something inside and out, then you have some sort of power over it. With knowledge comes familiarity; with familiarity comes complacency; with complacency comes contempt. Our understanding of God is not immune to this. Holiness, though, reminds us that our knowledge of God is not complete. Paul reminds us that now we only see in part and know in part, but then, in eternity, we will see and know God fully (1 Corinthians 13:12).

God's holiness makes the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus so amazing. The holy God decides to enter into his creation in order to reveal himself to humanity. The God that the prophets struggled to describe, upon whom no one could look and live because of God's holiness, now comes wrapped in flesh and blood. The holy, separate God is now the immanent, ever-present God as well. The God with whom we could have no relationship because of our sin provides an avenue for our forgiveness and a relationship with our creator. This is the incredible scandal of the Gospel: it is because of God's holiness, not despite God's holiness, that Jesus comes to us as one of us.

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<sup>1</sup>Clement of Alexandria, "The Stromata, or Miscellanies," in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, & A. C. Coxe (eds.), *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)* (Vol. 2, pp. 463-464), Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885.