Magnificent Transcendence

Readings, prayers, and hymns

Ken Bible

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Magnificent Transcendence

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?
Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?
Who can fathom the Spirit of the Lord, or instruct the Lord as his counselor?
Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?
Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?

Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. (Isaiah 40:12-17, NIV)

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Father, forgive our small ideas about who You are and what You do. Help us to know You and trust You for who You truly are. Father, Your reality is broader than our senses or imagination. Your world stretches far beyond this tiny realm and our brief few moments on this earth. Help us to live wholeheartedly with You and Your reality in view.

The Magnificent One

Isaiah 6:1-4; Habakkuk 2:20

He is the Magnificent One, transcendent,

high above, separate, and infinitely beyond.

He is

pure, perfect, incomparable, and absolutely glorious.

He is

Supreme, the Source of all being, the Creator, the Uncreated One.

Divine,

eternal, majestic, and exalted, He is always good, always just, and complete in Himself.

He is

the I AM.

He is

Holy God.

Father, You are eternal. Only in You are we eternal. You are holy. Only in You are we holy. You are all-in-all. Only in You are we complete.

~

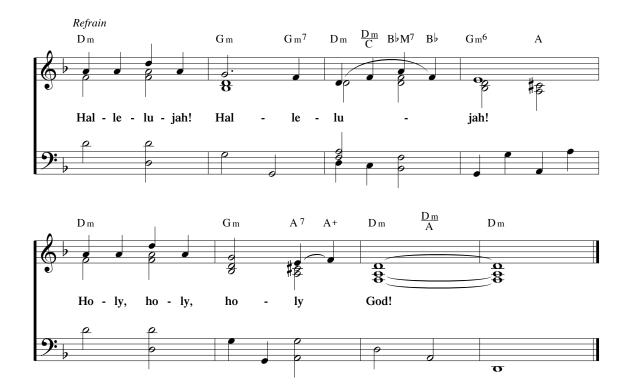
Hymn recording: Worshiping Transcendent God





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The Transcendent God

Death is naked before God... He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. By his power he churned up the sea... By his breath the skies became fair...

And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power? (Job 26:6-8, 11-14, NIV)

Many insist on a god as small as they are, a human deity comfortably within their puny understanding. They want a god without power, holiness, or transcendence, without fire, anger, zeal, or sovereignty; a god as ignorant, bland, spineless, and apathetic as they. Many prefer a god who is no god at all.

But for the true and living Creator, even our grandest images - the thunder of His power, the oceans of His love - are childish understatements. His love boils over into universes, races, and epochs, bounded only by His own wisdom. His self-giving cannot be stopped any more than a sandcastle can hold back the ocean.

I find comfort in the immanence of God, in His personal nearness and constant presence with me. He is closer and more intimate than any of us can imagine. Knowing Him and realizing His presence have transformed my entire life.

But in the rushing stream of our daily struggle and in the crises that inevitably come, I desperately need to see the transcendent God. I need to be reminded of the God who is God indeed, the One who is bigger than my shriveled perspective; the God who overflows all names and all descriptions; the God whose self-given name, "I AM," suggests that He is being itself, beyond all time and all categories.

Once we grasp that Almighty God is

fully real and is all He says He is, everything changes. Much of our religious talk becomes pale, humanistic, and irrelevant. Focusing on anyone or anything other than Him seems senseless. Once we know Him, He commands the stage.

~

Hymn recording: Our Lord I AM





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Inscrutable God

Unsearchable... mysterious... unfathomable... beyond investigation or scrutiny -He is the inscrutable God. No human effort can search Him out or penetrate His mystery. But He longs to be fully known by those He created from Himself. He works tirelessly to reveal Himself clearly and completely. As we actively trust Him, we come to know Him. But trusting and knowing God are a gradual, growing process. Our immature faith, our lingering self-centeredness, our smallness and fearfulness sometimes blind us to His goodness and rightness. When we don't understand what God is doing or not doing, know that it is because His wisdom and power and love are greater than we can possibly comprehend. We can find perfect peace in trusting Him, even when we don't understand Him.

Father, at present I see Your goodness most as You meet my narrow little needs. Broaden my heart that I might know more of Your magnificence.

~

Hymn recording: Inscrutable God

~



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Isaiah's Vision

Isaiah 6

Near the beginning of Isaiah's ministry, God gave him a vision of Himself. This vision would color everything Isaiah understood and said about God and His people. Uzziah had been one of the country's better kings and had reigned 52 years. Most of his subjects had only known this one king throughout their entire lives. So his death was a time of uneasiness and uncertainty. At such a time, God allowed Isaiah to see the one True King, the absolute ruler of all the universe, high and exalted, sitting on a throne. But since God is spirit, he doesn't have a body and thus doesn't literally sit on a throne. The throne helps us understand that God is a King. And the setting suggests that He is THE King. Note that though Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord," he never physically describes God. The same is true of other throne-room visions in the Bible. But what Isaiah sees and hears and senses in God's surroundings grips him with God's overwhelming reality and holiness. Though physically undescribed, God is at the center of the picture, filling and overflowing it. The train of His majestic robe fills the temple. The picture of His glory includes "Seraphim,"

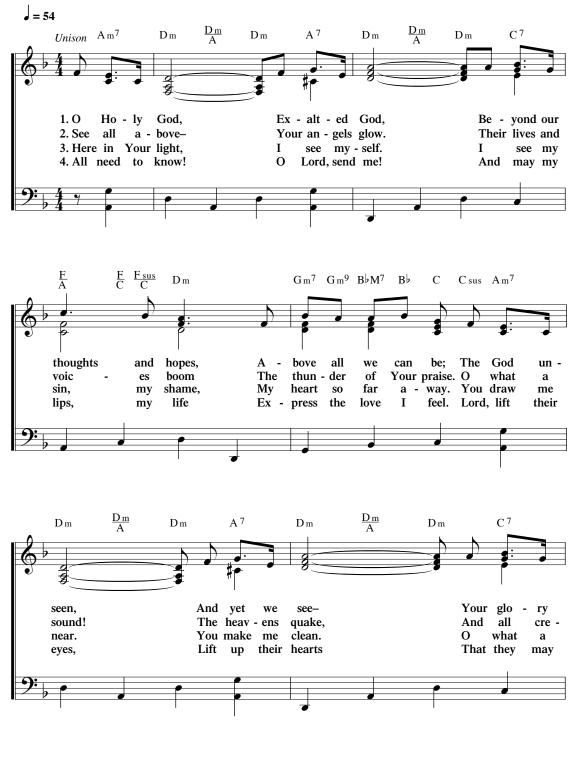
literally, "burning ones". With four of their six wings, they express their humility, covering their face and feet in God's presence. With the other two wings, they stand ready to fly and do God's will at a moment's notice, The entire building trembles with their thunderous, unceasing praise. Isaiah's response: "I am ruined...doomed...destroyed! For I am thoroughly unclean, and everyone around me is unclean, yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of all reality, the Holy One". But Holy God doesn't drive the unworthy sinner away.

He cleanses him. He draws him near. He calls him. He uses him. When God needs a messenger, Isaiah is first in line. He is eager to share this magnificent God! His lips, formerly unclean, are now privileged to carry God's holy word.

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Holy God, You are truth, constant and complete. The only way a weak, inconstant creature like me can come to You is humbly and honestly, confessing my complete neediness. Hymn recording: Isaiah 6

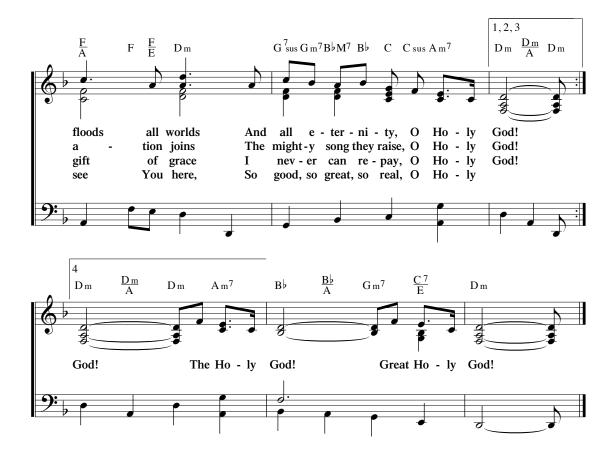
Isaiah 6



WORDS & MUSIC: Ken Bible

ISAIAH 6 4.4.6.6.4.4.6.6.4.

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We Need to See You

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted. (Isaiah 6:1, NASB)

Father, we are flooded with so many needs, but our real need is You.
We need to know You for all You are, the One true God, high and lifted up, the Holy One, our Source and Goal, the All-in-all, our Eternal Father.
We need to see You for all You are.
We need to trust You always for all You are.

Lift our eyes, Father. Help us to see You.

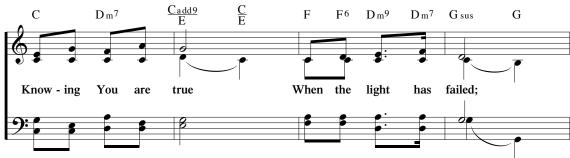
> God wants us to know Him. His most intricate and detailed works creation, the Bible, even the Old Testament tabernacle are those that fill our mind and senses with Him. Father, I want to know You. Open me to receive You.

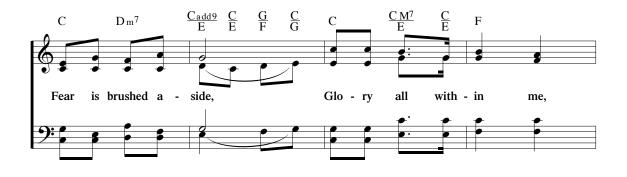
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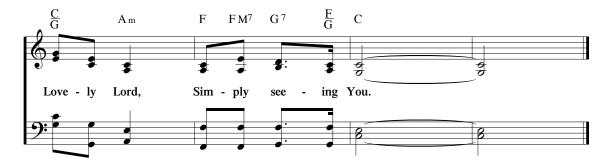
Hymn recording: Simply Seeing You











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Transcendent and Immanent

O God, You are transcendent, infinitely above us in every way, separate from this entire creation, of another realm, an unbounded Spirit being unhindered by space and time. Your seraphim, Your "burning ones" celebrate Your infinite exaltedness, Your separate-ness, Your utter purity, crying to each other instinctively, unceasingly, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3, NIV) But, O our God, You are also immanent, personally, intimately, completely, constantly with us. in the fullest sense, with all You are. Above us, around us, encompassing us, infilling us, transcendent, yet immanent! Praise and eternal worship be to You alone, Magnificent God!

~

We fail to fully grasp the wonderful reality of God because in our small and self-centered hearts, we cannot conceive any Being so much greater than ourselves.

~

Hymn recording: Transcendent and Immanent

Transcendent and Immanent

Genesis 2:7; Psalm 73:23-28; Isaiah 6:1; 40:12-26; 55:8-9; 57:15; Acts 17:28; Ephesians 3:14-21



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Earth Crawlers

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble. (Isaiah 40:21-24, NASB)

We were staying in Mackinaw City, on the shore of Lake Huron. Looking out over the waters, to the left was a beautiful view of the Mackinac Bridge.

From that distance, the vehicles seemed to be just creeping across the bridge. It reminded me of Genesis 1:24 where it talks about the "creeping things" God created on earth. From a higher perspective, our human race is among those creatures creeping across the surface of this tiny planet. How small and lowly we are! Only the image of our Creator makes us special. And how little we value that image, so arrogantly discarded long ago.

We crawl across the surface of this speck of dust, small, earthbound, in the grip of space and time. We are so small in mind that we mock the possibility of any reality beyond our own.

It reminds me how foolish we are to live for the glory that comes from our fellow earth crawlers. We were created for so much more! Father, raise my eyes. Lift my heart to crave the glory that comes only from You, the Eternal God of all truth, beauty, light, and life. You call me to be Your own child, holy in You, complete in You, forever one with You. Lord, help me to long for nothing else!

Father, we small, weak, short-lived creatures puff ourselves up and prance across this little stage, pretending we are in charge, pretending we are invincible. How foolish we must look to You! Sovereign God, You are our Father. We trust in You.

~

Hymn recording: <u>Hungry for God</u>



Justice

His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:4, NASB)

How do we know what is just and right in any particular situation? What is justice after all?

We usually think of justice as a certain standard of fairness, of right and wrong. We say that God is just because He consistently adheres to that standard.

But God is the creator and source of all. There is no separate standard of justice to which we compare Him. There is no outside set of rules by which He must abide in order to be "just". He Himself is the standard of justice. Justice flows from His character and is seen in all His actions. We say that He is just because we see that He is always consistent with Himself. His actions are always consistent with His perfect wisdom and perfect love.

So how can we understand justice and live just lives?

We are just when we are like Him. Our actions are just when we act like Him.

We often think of justice and mercy as opposites...or at least as two competing values that must be balanced. We see justice as absolute rightness, and mercy as a kindly compromise with justice. But when we realize that justice and mercy are both descriptions of God's nature, we see them not as opposites to be balanced. They are two facets of the same jewel. God is always completely merciful and always completely just.

Thus when we are called to seek justice in this unjust world, we are not called to a specific social agenda. We are called to think and live and be like God. We are called to be holy as He is holy, to live and speak the truth as He is the truth, to love as He loves. We are called to be His children, His ambassadors, His servants, His hands.

The Old Testament beautifully pictures our just and loving God, reporting His words and actions over many centuries. But He is most completely revealed in Jesus Christ. Christ is *the image of the invisible God* (Colossians 1:15) and *the exact representation of His being* (Hebrews 1:3). What is more, Christ enables us not only to see and know God, but to live in Him, and He in us. He gives us the Spirit of God so that by simple faith, we

can live just and loving lives in this present world. Through His people, and above His people, God is creating the just world that He has promised.

~

Father, Your goodness, justice, and mercy are such a comfort to us! We depend on them, appreciate them, and praise You for them. So help us to be good, just, and merciful with everyone we touch.

~

Hymn recording: <u>Justice Hymn</u>

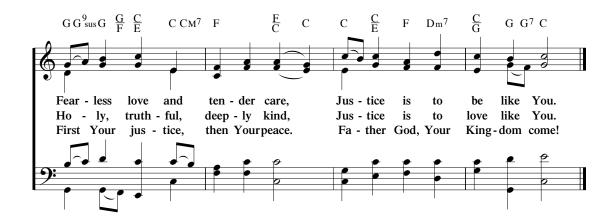
Justice Hymn

TUNE: Christ the Lord Is Risen Today (EASTER HYMN, alt.) Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Psalm 145; Isaiah 1:17; 11:1-9; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8; Matthew 6:9-10; Mark 13:32-37; Romans 13:8-10



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Reflection on Psalm 15

Lord God, Holy God, High above all that I am and all that I can imagine, You ask me to come to You. You invite me to come to You. But I am completely unworthy of You. How can I come? How should I come? You are holy. I come humbly. You are mercy. I come repenting. You are perfect in power, perfect in wisdom, perfect in love. I come trusting You. You are truth. I will meditate on Your truth, speak Your truth, and live Your truth. You love each of us, all of us, deeply and completely. Father, I will love each of us, all of us. as You love us, deeply, completely, actively, generously, fearlessly. But God,

I can do none of this on my own. I will depend on Your almighty, all-wise, all-loving Spirit. You pour Him out freely, lavishly on all who come to You as a child, all who simply trust You.

~

Father, thank You, thank You, thank You! In Christ You make me worthy of Your holy, beautiful presence. You welcome me with a smile and bless me. And You are faithfully making me more and more like Christ day by day. Praise to You!

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Hymn recording: Psalm 15



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Alternate Tune: GERMANY

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Reflection on Psalm 93

Yahweh, Creator, Savior, our Father, rules all reality as Sovereign King. Absolute power and unimaginable glory surround Him like a garment. His control is eternal, unshakable and unchallenged. The world's stability and security rest not on created things but on Him. The chaos in our world and in our lives seems fierce and threatening, But His Word is sovereign. His love is all-wise and unfailing. His faithfulness is absolutely, eternally dependable.

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Lift the eyes of your imagination to the Lord on High!

Compare Him to the grandest images from anywhere in creation, and He is more majestic, more solid, more everlasting, more wonderful. Praise to You, Almighty God! We are immovable in You!

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Hymn recording: Psalm 93

Psalm 93



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Reflection on Psalm 99

When we think of God as being "above us", what do we mean? It is less matter of physical location than quality of being. His transcendence means He is outside this creation, separate from it, unlimited by it. He is "above" it in the sense that He sees it all. knows it all, controls it all, is infinitely greater than it all, and is qualified to judge it all, perfectly and completely. And yet... His love keeps Him in constant. intimate contact with us and with our physical home at every level. That's why He incarnated Himself made Himself one of us so that He could touch us, share in our lives, and fully share Himself with us. He draws near to us and longs to draw us near to Him. He speaks to us and eagerly waits for us to speak to Him.

His holiness – that is, His

purity and transcendence does not keep Him separate from us. On the contrary, because He is holy, His love is pure and undiluted, burning, yearning, ceaseless working to unite us to Himself. His goal is simply this: that we might trust Him so that He can work all His magnificent loving will in us forever.

~

O Living God, how every person on earth would tremble if they fully realized that You are REAL, and You are everything You claim to be. You are holy! You are just! You answer when we talk to You and obey You. We turn to You now and bow to You. We trust You and exalt You, Holy God!

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Hymn recording: Psalm 99

Psalm 99



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Reflection on Psalm 131

Father, You are All-in-all. I am need. You are self-contained, self-sufficient, always overflowing, always freely giving. I am inherently, totally dependent. You created me for constant, complete dependence on You. You designed me for constant, complete relationship with You. You destined me for constant, complete fullness in You. So, my Father, seeing You for all You are and myself for all I am not, I set aside my self-importance, my futile struggles, my frantic grasping, my fruitless ambition. I welcome humility. I embrace contentment. I breathe the simplicity of childlike trust. I come to You like a weaned infant not scrambling to satisfy my own desires, but quietly resting in You.

> Strong and gentle Father, continue to draw me to rest in You simply and constantly.

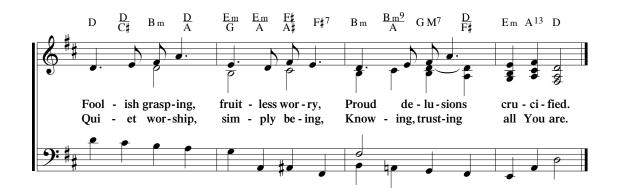
Hymn recording: Psalm 131

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Your Holy Temple

I will be careful to lead a blameless life... I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing... I will have nothing to do with evil. (Psalm 101:2-4, NIV)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NIV)

Father, I cherish Your holy presence always with me, always in me, and always enveloping me.

Help me never to entertain thoughts that are offensive to You or say words that are unloving or take actions unworthy of the name of Christ.

By Your Holy Spirit, by simple faith, keep my heart, mind, and life pure, fit for your use.

> If a man cleanses himself... he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. (2 Timothy 2:21, NIV)

Father, am I clinging to any habits or attitudes that draw me from You? Show me, and help me put them aside.

~

Hymn recording: Prayer for Purity



WORDS: Ken Bible, based on The Book of Common Prayer MUSIC: Frederick C. Atkinson

MORECAMBE 10.10.10.10.

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