

God Is Holy • Isaiah 6:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *What Does God Look Like*

1. A new kindergarten teacher wanted to get to know his students so he told everyone in his class to draw a picture of what was the most important thing to them
2. In the back of the room, Johnny began to labor over his drawing.
3. Everybody else finished and handed in their picture but he kept drawing
4. The teacher waited, and waited, then finally walked to the back of the room to see what was taking Johnny so long. He asked "What are you drawing?"
5. Johnny said, "I'm drawing a picture of God!"
6. The teacher replied, "But Johnny, no one knows what God looks like!"
7. Johnny said, "They will once I'm done."

B. *The Desire To See God*

1. Who among us hasn't wished at some time we could *see* God?
2. We think, "If only God would reveal Himself to me; if only He would appear, just once - oh that would forever settle my doubts and make me a person of incredible faith."
3. "Why on the power of that once revelation - I could become a world-changer, a history maker!"
4. "If only I could see God!"
5. People often think this when they are going through a period of testing
 - a. when they feel like they're slipping away,
 - b. they long for God to show up and affirm His reality and presence

C. *What Would Happen*

1. What we don't realize is that if we *really did see God*, it would be a very different experience from what we expect
2. It certainly wouldn't be the *comforting* and *soothing* thing most of us think it would be
3. It would be so incredibly disturbing, it would shake us to the very core of our being
4. In fact, the problems that seem so big to us *before* that revelation, would seem very small *after* seeing God
5. This is what happened to the Prophet Isaiah
6. He was given a vision of God, and it radically changed him AND his life

II. TEXT

A. *V. 1*

- 1 **In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.**

1. In the first 5 chapters, Isaiah declared the God's judgment on the people of Israel for their departure from Him
2. When the people heard these harsh warnings, their first response was, "Who does this guy think he is and what gives him the right to speak to us like this?"
3. So here in Chapter 6, Isaiah explains how he was called to the role of prophet
4. His calling came in the last year of King Uzziah
 - a. Uzziah ruled for 52 years, and brought the nation to it's greatest point since the days of David & Solomon
 - b. during his early years of his reign, he led the nation in a renewal of devotion to the Lord
 - c. but his military victories and domestic successes led to pride, and his fervor for the Lord died
 - d. his last years were marked by a cold spiritual indifference
 - e. that coldness allowed the people of the land to revert to the national sins that had been sown by several previous *evil* kings
 - f. once again, idols were worshiped & the people engaged in all kinds of wickedness
 - g. corruption ate at the heart of every level of society
5. Isaiah was raised up by God during this time to warn the people about the inevitable result of straying from Him
 - a. if they did not forsake their wickedness, judgment would come
 - b. but if they repented, God would preserve and bless them
6. Here in Chapter 6, Isaiah explains how it was that he was called, where he got his authority to say what it was he said
7. Since we know that he lived through the reigns of *four* kings had to have come when he was fairly young
8. And it began with a vision of heaven
 - a. what Isaiah was doing when he had this vision we aren't told
 - b. suddenly, the veil between heaven and earth, between the seen and the unseen, was pulled aside
 - c. and Isaiah was given the sight to see something normally hidden from mortal eyes
 - d. he was allowed to gaze into the very throne room of God
 - e. what he saw forever changed his life
9. He saw the Lord, seated on His throne
10. And the glory that came from the Lord's presence was so great, Isaiah says that it was like a train that was so long, it filled the entire heavenly temple
 - a. today, about the only time you see is a train on a garment is on an expensive wedding dress
 - b. but in the ancient world, a train was a symbol of *glory*
 - c. because of modern mills and methods of garment making, *we* think little about the cost of clothing
 - d. but in the ancient world, when all fabrics and clothing were hand-made, clothes were *very* expensive
 - e. it was only the rich and powerful who were able to add *extra* material to their clothes
 - f. so the longer the train, the more rich you were and the more glory you

- possessed
- g. it was kings who had the *longest* trains on their robes
 - h. as they passed by their subjects, the long train of the royal robe was meant to *impress* them with the great power and majesty of the monarch
11. When Isaiah said that the train of God's robe *filled* the temple, he's saying that from one side of heaven to the other, God's glory filled the place
 12. Just as air is the *atmosphere* of earth, so God's glory is the *atmosphere* of heaven

B. V. 2

2 Above it [meaning the throne of God] stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

1. This is the only place in the Bible where the word *seraphim* is found
 - a. the root word means *to burn*
 - b. the seraphim are the *burning ones*
 - c. meaning their appearance is so glorious it looks like they are on fire
2. As Isaiah describes them here, the seraphim sound very much like the *cherubim* in Ezekiel and the book of Revelation
 - a. they are heavenly beings of tremendous power and glory -
 - b. who are always found around the throne of God - and that's precisely where we find them here
 - c. they seem to function something like God's *honor* guard
3. Isaiah doesn't tell us too much about their appearance except to say they have six wings
 - a. with two of them they cover their face - probably because God's glory is so intense, it's too much *even for them*, to steadfastly gaze at - just as it is too much for us to do more than make a quick glance at the sun
 - b. with two more wings they cover their feet - probably because of the consciousness of their *humility* as creatures
 - c. and with two wings they fly - they are ever ready to go and do God's bidding
4. But it was what the seraphim said that made the deepest impression on Isaiah . . .

C. Vs. 3-4

3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

1. It's hard for us to relate to this scene Isaiah is describing because it's completely outside the realm of our experience
2. But *try* to see this if you can . . .
 - a. heaven is rock solid - it cannot be shaken because it is the Home of the unshakeable God
 - b. but when a seraph speaks to another of the holiness of God, the power of it's voice is so awesome, the very doorframe of the throne room of heaven

is *shaken*

- c. the smoke that filled the house was another manifestation of the glory of God filling the temple
 - d. His glory is so great, one manifestation wasn't enough, so like the waves that role up on the shore, one after another, another wave of God's glory washes over the scene
3. It's the seraph's message I want to focus on this morning
 4. Here is the single sentence it uttered - Here is the one thing that of all it *could* have said, it was compelled to say . . .

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

5. When God or the angels say something *once* - it's important
 - a. when they *repeat* themselves, it's because there is a special sense of urgency or finality to what they are saying - as when Jesus said, "Verily, verily . . . "
 - b. but when we see something *three times* - it's a sign of *ultimate* importance
 - c. it is one of those critical truths that all must know and appropriate
6. The seraph doesn't say "Holy is the Lord" nor even "Holy, *holy* is the Lord."
7. It says, "Holy, *holy*, ***holy*** is the Lord of hosts!"
8. The point is..... GOD IS **HOLY!**
9. He is set apart - as Isaiah says in v. 1, he is high and lifted up!
 - a. holiness *isn't* just *one* of God's many attributes, it is more than that
 - b. it's something that embraces ALL His attributes
 - 1) His justice is holy
 - 2) His love is holy
 - 3) His omnipotence is holy
 - 4) His mercy is holy
 - 5) on and on it goes
10. It's interesting, no where else do we see an attribute of God raised to the power of three as we do here
 - a. no where do we see, "Wrath, wrath, wrath is the Lord."
 - b. or "Just, just, just is the Lord."
 - c. or even " Love, love, love is the Lord."
 - d. but we do hear, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.'
11. In fact, so holy is God that heaven itself cannot contain it so His glory spills out of heaven and into earth
 - a. we see it in the Colorado Rockies covered with snow; the Eastern ridge of the Sierra Nevadas
 - b. a high mountain meadow in full bloom with wildflowers
 - c. I've seen some pretty amazing things that man has done with his skill in construction and engineering
 - 1) Hoover dam
 - 2) Taj Mahal
 - 3) Great Pyramid
 - 4) these are all amazing feats
 - d. but set any of them next to a summer sunset, or a snow-capped mountain,

- and they pale in comparison
 - e. what is more awesome, Hoover dam, or the majestic Colorado River canyon it spans?
 - f. what is more glorious, the Great Pyramid - or that vast expanse of North African desert on which it sits as a tiny speck?
12. God's holiness is so great, that it overflows the very courts of heaven and tumbles out into the universe and right down into our world
 13. Look at Isaiah's reaction to this revelation of the holiness of God . . .

D. V. 5

5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

1. The seraph cries "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!" and Isaiah cries "Woe is me!"
2. Now you need to know something about Isaiah; he was a righteous and good man
 - a. he had been selected by God to be a prophet because of his loyalty to the Lord
 - b. he was a courageous man whom the Lord picked because in the midst of the corruption of his age, he would speak the hard but necessary word of warning and call the people to repentance
 - c. Isaiah was a righteous man - at least in comparison to others
3. But when Isaiah saw himself in the light of *God's* holiness, it wiped him out!
4. He's not just saying, "Oh my!" here
5. He's pronouncing *woe* upon himself - he sees himself as *cursed*
 - a. in the face of God's perfection, his own imperfection is brought out in high relief
 - b. the light of glory has revealed his own darkness
6. If you look at the surface of a piece of glass with just the unaided eye, it will appear smooth
 - a. in fact, we use the phrase, "smooth as glass" as a way to say that something *is* smooth
 - b. but take a piece of glass and put it under a high powered microscope and you will see something very different
 - c. suddenly, the surface of the glass is a landscape of pits and scratches
 - d. it looks more like the surface of the moon
7. Isaiah seemed like a pretty together guy as long as his perspective was merely human
8. But as soon as he got a glimpse of God, his perspective went through a major overhaul
9. And far from being a together kind of guy, he started coming apart, which is what he said about himself -
 - a. "Woe is me, for I am undone"
 - b. literally = "I am coming apart at the seams."
10. Some time back, I had to turn in a research paper for a college class
 - a. the professor told us that she was going to grade it very carefully so we

- needed to use all the right forms for a term paper
- b. I turned in what I thought was a perfect paper and was really excited to get it back because I expected an A
 - c. I got the A, but she had gone through and marked EVERY page with a red pen on everything from misplaced commas to improper footnote positioning
 - d. I don't think there was a single paragraph that didn't have some correction
 - e. now, if I had set my paper next to the others in the class, I know it would have come off as one of the best
 - f. but in the light of the professor's scrutiny - it was a mess!
 - g. as I said, I got the A - but all the red ink ruined it - I wanted nothing but her praise - I got nothing but her scorn
11. You and I may look pretty together, pretty moral and good if we compare ourselves to our age and the people around us
 12. But that is not who we are to hold ourselves up to
 - a. morality isn't defined by community standards
 - b. right and wrong cannot be determined by taking a poll
 13. That standard is God
 14. And in the light of His holiness and glory - we have to say with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone!"
 15. "Not only is the age in which I live corrupt - but so am I!!!!!"

E. Vs. 6-7

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

1. God allowed this whole vision of His holiness, not to crush Isaiah, not to humiliate him, but to *humble* him
2. While the revelation did overwhelm him, it was God's intent from the beginning to restore him
3. So as soon as the vision had effected it's desired end and Isaiah now had a right knowledge of both himself and God, one of the Seraphim came to restored him
4. Isaiah had come to see the impurity of his own life as symbolized by his impure speech
5. So the seraph took a live coal from off the heavenly altar and touched Isaiah's lips with it
6. What was burned away was not his lips but the impurity
7. Friends, God does not convict us of our sin only so that we would then walk around with the weight of our own guilt and unworthiness
 - a. He convicts so that we might be *unburdened!*
 - b. it is His desire to set us free from sin, not crush us beneath it
 - c. but the necessary path to deliverance goes through conviction
 - d. we will not seek forgiveness for that which we are unaware of

F. V. 8

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

1. Ultimately, the reason why God granted Isaiah this vision was because the nation needed the Lord -
2. And the Lord needed someone who would go to the nation with His message
3. Isaiah was the man for the mission, but he needed preparation
4. Before we can minister to others, we must permit God to minister to us.
5. Before we pronounce "woe" upon others, we must sincerely say, "Woe is me!"
 - a. Isaiah's conviction led to confession,.
 - b. and confession led to cleansing
6. Now cleansed and charged with a vision of God, he was ready, so the challenge was issued, and Isaiah rose to the occasion

III. CONCLUSION

A. God Is Holy

1. This passage has much to say to us this morning, for our time is much like Isaiah's
2. Just as Israel had forgotten all about God's holiness - So the modern evangelical church has lost it's consciousness of the holiness of the Lord
3. In our fervor to preach a gospel of love and grace, we have neglected the truth that God is Holy!
4. We have taken the Holy One of Israel and turned Him into a gentle old grandfather who sits on the front porch of heaven rocking away the days and nights, smiling benignly at all His grandchildren
5. Holiness has become little more than a theological abstract, a word to be defined and written in notebooks
6. We need a new vision of the holiness of God!
7. We need to see Him high and lifted up
8. We need to hear the seraphim crying "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!"
9. We need to see ourselves in the light of His glory and then know the cleansing power of His fire!

B. Shaken!

1. A recent survey of people who had stopped going to church revealed the main reason why they left was because church was boring!
2. It's difficult for many people to find worship a *moving* experience
3. But set that attitude alongside what we see here -
4. When worship happens in heaven - things move!
 - a. the very doorposts begin to shake
 - b. and Isaiah was shaken to his core
5. Friend, when was the last time *you* were shaken by God?
 - a. when was the last time you came face to face with God's glory?
 - b. when was the last time that God's holiness was so real to you, so tangible that it caused you to say - "Woe is me for I am undone!"

C. *Lost it*

1. It's my firm conviction that God wants to give a new vision of Himself to His Church because we've lost the sense of His holiness
2. And we've lost the sense of His holiness because quite frankly, it scares us!
3. It is so much easier relating to a God who is nothing but sweetness
4. It's so much easier selling Him to a world that dislikes hearing it's lost in sin
5. But a god who is not Holy, is not a god worth believing in
6. A god who is not holy is no god at all
7. We must not shrink from declaring that OUR GOD is a Holy God!
 - a. He hates sin
 - b. in fact, he hates it so much that He has pledged Himself to judge it
 - c. but because He loves us despite the sin, He sent His Son to take the brunt of the judgment our sin deserves
 - d. by putting our trust in Christ, we can be cleaned from sin just as Isaiah was