

Isaiah 6-"Our Holy God"

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Introduction

Today's study is on Isaiah 6 where Isaiah the Prophet is sent out to proclaim God's message of judgment upon the people. Before he is sent out, the LORD of Heaven and Earth allows him to have a vision of His Great Holiness and Majesty!

During Isaiah's ministry, this prophet of God had the incredible and challenging task of bringing the message of God's judgment to the nation Israel. King Uzziah had died after ruling Israel for over 50 years and the time of glory in Israel's history was about to be over. In response to the people turning away from God by breaking the covenant they had made with him to obey his Law, God would send judgment in the Assyrian army and the people would be sent into exile.

To prepare Isaiah for this difficult preaching ministry of God's Word, God revealed himself to Isaiah in a vision. Isaiah sees what is called a *Theophany*, or an appearance of God [2 Greek words made into 1 English Word- theo="God" + Phaneo= "appearance"= "Theophany"]. God reveals himself to Isaiah so that it would humble him and remind him of the incredible power of God's wrath, and the awesome holiness of His character and person.

This week we celebrate the 300th birthday of Jonathan Edwards. God used this man to bring true reformation and revival to the people in New England. Why? Because Edwards faithfully preached God's Word and kept his preaching focused, as well as his people's focus, on the holiness and beauty of God.

Edwards never flinched at telling the people of God about the awesome God who he served and how his holiness demands infinite punishment for sin because sin has infinitely offended a holy God. May we return to this kind of preaching and understanding of God in our time. May it be what brings us all to our knees in repentance!

Isaiah 6

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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!" ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." ⁸ And 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." ⁹ And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "' Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." ¹¹ Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, ¹² and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. ¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Summary of Isaiah 6

that I might be holy as he is holy!" What a difference this would make in our lives if we all were to set out to pursue Christ-likeness or holiness in this manner.

And we can, by God's grace and by asking him to give us the same vision that Isaiah had through his Word and by the power of His Spirit working within us! Remember: Without holiness, no man shall see the LORD (Hebrews 12).

The Teaching of Scripture on God's Holiness

It is interesting that Scripture describes God and His name over 900 times as "Holy". Here are a few references as to how Scripture defines God's holiness, or what makes God "GOD".

In the context of God's redeeming Israel from Egypt, Moses sings in **Exodus 15:11** "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" David gives praise to God because of who he is in **Psalms 29:2** "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness". In a Psalm concerning God's covenant promises to David, the Psalmist writes in **Psalms 89:35** "Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David". Again, considering God's covenant promises, the Psalmist writes of God's holy promises in **Psalms 108:7** "God has promised in his holiness: "With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Valley of Succoth. And in the later prophecy of Isaiah, Isaiah describes the place of God's habitation in **Isaiah 63:15** "Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me."

God reveals himself as holy so that we might know of our need for atonement, our distance that has been placed between God and ourselves because of our sin, and that we might return to him so that he might make us holy as he is holy! Our great goal in the Christian life is to be made holy as God is holy!

Yet, why is his holiness so foreign to us all? Our sins have made us all dull to his holy beauty and caused us to seek after everything but God in and of himself. We seek his gifts, what he can do for us, but how often do we actually pursue God and His Holiness just because of his loveliness and great beauty in and of himself?

Holiness is not something we think upon often enough. We have so many other thoughts that occupy our time, why do we not think more about this glorious vision of God's holiness? Holiness is a thing that men are least concerned with because they are tainted by sin, yet it is the most beautiful part of God and creation. We should ask God to give us hearts to pursue him for WHO HE IS in and of himself, in all his glorious beauty and holiness, rather than merely when he gives us what we want! In other words, we pray that we can say "holy, holy, holy" more often than crying to God "me, me, me!"

Do we honor God's holiness in our worship? God is present when two or more are gathered in his name to worship him. Are we overwhelmed by His Holy Presence or do we walk (or casually prance) into worship without a thought of our sin and his greatness. Do we tremble at all?? Or, do we come carelessly into the presence of God with no thought to his great mercy and holiness?

Do you remember the spiritual "Were You There?" Remember the line that says: "Sometime it causes me to tremble...tremble...tremble!" I don't think in our worship services we have enough "tremblin'" goin' on these days. We do indeed call God "Father", but even Jesus the glorious, eternal Son of God, addressed God as "HOLY" Father! (John 17)...and Isaiah when he got a glimpse of God's holiness did not say "Daddy- -what a super-duper dude you are!"

Remember: Unclean Lips Reveal Unclean Hearts- “Lips are the tip of the sinful iceberg” Isaiah's problem was that his heart, his sinful problem in the heart, was revealed by his lips. From out of the heart comes uncleanness, Jesus says (Matt. 15). So, Isaiah's lips are a "dead giveaway" that he is a sinner in need of redemption if he is to stand in the presence of a Holy God!

Isaiah was God's man to preach his Word and through his lips men would hear judgment and grace. Yet, this was the opening, the outlet, the tip that revealed Isaiah's sin and guilt and need for God's assistance if he was going to stay in his presence. So, Isaiah is cut to the heart- “Woe is me!!” He is terrified. The other people in Isaiah's day were not so fearful of God. They continued to break his Law and step on the grace and mercy that God had shown to them.

“I am undone”, says Isaiah - -unraveled: It is this vision of the holiness of God that reveals our sins and our need for his help. Listen to Calvin on this:

“...Until God reveal himself to us, we do not think that we are men, or rather, we think that we are gods; but when we have seen God, we then begin to feel and know what we are. Hence springs true humility, which consists in this, that a man makes no claims for himself, and depends wholly on God...”

Many in our day are the same. We get “accustomed” or “used” to hearing of God's grace and forgiveness. We recognize that we are truly forgiven and have been given the righteousness of Christ, yet we forget that God is HOLY and is a consuming fire. Even today, many of us are trying to change certain behaviors or habits rather than focusing on the real problem which is the heart.

Only God can fix this deep and radical problem of the heart. He begins this good work of fixing the root in the heart by atoning for our sins and sending his Holy Spirit to change what we love, what we set our affections upon, so that we might ultimately set our heart's eye and focus sincerely and singularly on the LORD's beauty and holiness!

God's Forgiveness of Guilt and Sin

God is willing to remove Isaiah's guilt and sin, and send him out as an imperfect but faithful representative of God's message of judgment as well as his message of salvation for the few who will hear, see and believe!

When we hear “Holy, holy, holy” we are like Isaiah: We hear “guilt, guilt, guilt”! But God takes away our guilt in Christ Jesus. God gives us new hearts so that we might find him utterly lovely. The angel in Isaiah's vision takes tongs from the altar, takes a hot, burning coal and makes atonement for Isaiah's sins by touching his lips. This is symbolic to the Person and Work of Christ for us in atonement. Christ Jesus our Savior lays down his life and sheds his blood on the altar in heaven, taking God's wrath upon him so he can send the Holy Spirit to us.

The coal from the altar symbolizes punishment and purification. The altar from which the coal was taken was the place where bulls and goats were placed to shed blood before God and to offer a substitute in place of the sinner. The fire that consumed the animal on the altar was God's purification. In Christ, Jesus lays down his life once and for all as a man, a once and for all sacrifice for sinners to be punished in their place. After his resurrection from the dead and ascension back to the throneroom of heaven, Jesus sends forth His Spirit to us so that we might then be purified. So, the coal from the altar symbolizes the punishment and purification that would come in time because of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ!

When we get a glimpse God's beauty by His Sovereign Grace in the face of Jesus Christ, we see the ugliness of our sins and the life our sins have tainted! We glimpse God's holiness, we understand a little more the unholiness of our sinful affections. Yet God is gracious to us as well! He takes our sinful hearts when we are

the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's work is to point to Christ and His atonement so that you might have salvation and assurance in that salvation (John 14-16). Once the Spirit begins a good work (Phil. 1:6), he continues to make us Holy as Christ was Holy, so He might present us to Christ as a pure and unspotted bride (Eph. 5:28ff).

In other words, when God grips us by His grace, he begins a transforming work in us by His "HOLY" Spirit. Just as when his presence before Moses turned plain earth into *Holy ground*; just as when he gave the priests of the temple garments to wear, they became *Holy garments*; just as when God came to accept the sacrifices in the small room in the temple, his presence made this small room, a cubed box, the *Holy of Holies*; so he comes to dwell in us and by his presence he takes those corrupted and tainted by sin and makes us *HOLY PEOPLE*. Allow this reality in Christ to fuel your pursuit of holiness and encourage you to combat sin, flesh, and the devil with all you of the power you have within you (Eph. 3:14-21).

The wonder of God's Spirit indwelling us as God's people is that the Holy Spirit indwelling us is not merely a gift *from God*, but is a gift *of God*. If we want reformation and revival in our time, it will be because of God's Spirit and grace working through the preaching of His Holy Word and a continuous meditation on and glimpse of Our Holy God!

Benediction:

Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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