

Captivated by a Holy God

Isaiah 6:1 – 8

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Introduction

When I was in seminary I had been saved and had a relationship with Christ for about 7 years. I faithfully served him and spent time in His Word daily. But one day I came across a book that changed my whole perspective of God. The book was “Knowing God” by J.I. Packer. The book took and studied the various attributes of God like I had studied in college and seminary but Packer went a step further and applied those attributes to how God deals with us intimately as individuals that He loves, knows our name and is out to help us be all that we were created to be.

A light went on in my heart that I was serving God out of duty for what He has done for me, but I should be serving Him out of awe, respect and love for who He is and what He has done in my life. One of the most important things I learned was that all of God’s attributes come out of one attribute. If God did not possess this one particular attribute, the others would not be so significant. The fact that God is holy and is the only holy God and is the personification of holiness, then all the other attributes God possesses would fade in their importance.

Alternative Introduction:

As I share with you my last sermon as Pastor, two things come to my mind. First and foremost, I hope and trust that everyone who is part of our church family has a personal relationship with Christ and is sure they are on their way to heaven. The former pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, said on his deathbed that he had only one regret: that he thought 40 – 50 % of his congregation might not be saved. I have repeatedly shared the Gospel and given invitations over the years in Awana, in ministry situations, and certainly here from the pulpit. It would break my heart to find out when I get to heaven that someone did not receive Christ as Savior.

Second, this is the most important sermon I could share with you as I close my time as Pastor here at Pleasant View. I heard a message on Isaiah 6 by a very famous preacher in the early 1980s on Isaiah 6 and this chapter, and the image it gives has stuck with me and influenced me tremendously over the years.

We live in a culture where most people do not understand and meditate on the holiness of God. Even in our church, we do not have a good understanding of what it is to fear the Lord. One of the things I learned from this passage and from reading J.I. Packer’s book, Knowing God, is that all of God’s attributes come out of one attribute. If God did not possess this one particular attribute, the others would not be so significant. The fact that God is holy and is the only holy God and is the

source of holiness, then all the other attributes God possesses would fade in their importance.

This morning, let's look at Isaiah chapter 6, all thirteen verses. Isaiah, along with just a few other people in the Bible, got a glimpse, a brief vision of God in His exalted place, and saw Him in all of His radiance and glory.

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

Purpose: To see a holy God is to live differently

Transition Statement: I am thankful God included this vision in scripture for posterity so that we can share in what Isaiah saw long ago.

Isaiah was consumed by his vision of the holy God – 6:1 – 4

Isaiah 6:1a

1a In the year that King Uzziah died

- You say what is the big deal about this first part of the first verse.
- Well if you were King Uzziah it would be a big deal
- If you were Israel it would be a big deal
- Uzziah was king of Judah for 52 years. Isaiah was a prophet to him for part of those years
- The Israelites enjoyed peace and prosperity and security under his reign.

- Outwardly Uzziah was a great king and very benevolent doing a lot for the people of Israel to make their life easy and to help them to prosper.
- Inwardly, the nation of Israel was corrupt
 - Uzziah did not serve the Lord but served pagan gods,
 - The Israelites had become complacent in their worship of God and in following the Law.
 - The Israelites allowed sin to creep in and take over segments of their society.
 - Their worship had become just a mere ritual, something they did to hopefully keep on God's good side to continue to bring the blessings.
 - Let's look back at Isaiah 5 to get some background on the condition of the culture at that time.

Isaiah 5:18-24 (The Message)

Doom to you who use lies to sell evil, who haul sin to market by the truckload, who say, "What's God waiting for? Let him get a move on so we can see it. Whatever The Holy of Israel has cooked up, we'd like to check it out." Doom to you who call evil good and good evil, Who put darkness in place of light and light in place of darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Doom to you who think you're so smart, who hold such a high opinion of yourselves! All you're good at is drinking—champion boozers who collect trophies from drinking bouts And then line your pockets with bribes from the guilty while you violate the rights of the innocent. But they won't get by with it. As fire eats stubble and dry grass goes up in smoke, Their souls will atrophy, their achievements crumble into dust, Because they said no to the revelation of God-of-the-Angel-Armies, Would have nothing to do with The Holy of Israel.

- One day Uzziah took it upon himself to go into the temple and he did something that disobeyed God. God struck him with leprosy and was deemed ceremonially unclean and he eventually died as a leper. He finished his life, separated from people and having to yell "Unclean, Unclean," when people came by.
- The security and stability of Israel were rocked by his death. Uncertainty of the future made the nation tense and nervous.
- The Israelites unconsciously had moved from the dependence and worship of God to dependence and worship of Uzziah and what he brought to them. We see the false security of man
- False security of man

- We see America and most of the world in a similar situation as that of the Israelites.
- We live where man is at the center of the universe
 - That is not only true for non-believers but sometimes for us as Christ followers as well.
 - But like Isaiah, we need to be reminded who God is and who we are. God has a way in our lives of putting things back into perspective, sometimes in a quick way.
 - Let's look at what happened now that Uzziah is gone and the nation of Israel is wondering what is next for them.
 - God reveals Himself to Isaiah in a vision.

Isaiah 1b -4

1b I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

○ Fear of the Lord

- I believe that as Isaiah began to see this vision unfold, he was filled with reverential fear and awe of God.
- To fear God is not just to be frightened of Him; we will see that that was one of Isaiah's responses in a sense.
- To fear God is to revere Him, to be in awe of Him, to have a healthy respect for who He is and what He can do.
- But God does not want to be unapproachable, even though He is the supreme power.
- Notice some components of this vision.

○ Power

- Isaiah said God was seated on a throne, showing His sovereign rule and power, and authority over all the nations of the world.
- The throne represents God's authority and being the sovereign ruler of the world.
- It says here that He is high and exalted
- Is God the sovereign ruler of your life, or are we like the Israelites in Isaiah 5:18-19 that taunted God and

tried to tell Him to hurry up and speak to them and tell them what was going on in their lives?

Isaiah 5:18-19

18-19 Doom to you who use lies to sell evil, who haul sin to market by the truckload, who say, "What's God waiting for? Let him get a move on so we can see it. Whatever The Holy of Israel has cooked up, we'd like to check it out."

- Do you see Him as the chief architect and engineer behind the plans that He has for your life?
- Are you yielding daily to His sovereign rule in your life?

- Presence

- In this vision Isaiah saw the very presence of God.
- I believe this was a vision of the pre-incarnate Christ.
- We know from the Bible that God is not visible

I Timothy 1:17

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- We also know from scripture that if someone sees the Lord face to face, they will die

Exodus 33:18 – 20

When Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

- So, in verse one, Isaiah is saying that He saw the Lord, probably the pre-incarnation of Christ. In other words, He saw Christ before He came to earth.
- Isaiah saw the very presence of God.
- We see the train of his robe that filled the temple.
- It is interesting that God reveals Himself in this vision in the temple. We know that the temple and the temple sacrifices pictured the righteous dealings of the sovereign God and His covenant dealings with His people.

- Notice God's presence filled the temple.
- Notice that there were seraphs
 - Seraph in Hebrew literally means to burn.
 - They had two wings that covered their face which showed their humility before God.
 - They had two wings that covered their feet which showed their holy service to God.
 - They had two wings for flying that showed that they were capable and available to go at God's command to proclaim God's holiness and glory throughout the universe
 - Notice the repetition in verse 3 of the words Holy, Holy, Holy. This shows the Trinity of God and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal.
 - This also shows us God's utter, supreme, and complete holiness. God is pure in His holiness. Not much if anything, is 100% pure in this life, but God continues to be perfect in His holiness.
 - Notice also what happened as the seraphs glorify God and proclaim His holiness in verse four.

Isaiah 6:4

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

- The thresholds were those large foundation stones that held the doorposts firmly in the ground.
 - The doorposts rested on those mighty thresholds.
 - The thresholds and doorposts shook, revealing the awesome power and presence of a holy God.
 - The writer of Hebrews says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God."
 - Isaiah was consumed and overwhelmed by what he was seeing firsthand.
 - I can't imagine what was going through His mind. At first, he was awestruck I am sure.
- Preeminence
 - The phrase "train of His robe" and the smoke as the foundations shook is God revealing His glory in the vision.

- This is the same shekinah glory that God revealed to the Israelites in their wilderness journey as He was present with them in the tabernacle. A cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- This is the same shekinah glory that shone at the temple that Solomon built, that rested over the Ark of the Covenant as a visible reminder that God is with them.

Application: Do we take time daily to get into God's presence and seek to see Him for who He is in all of His glory?

Transition: Isaiah is seeing the holy God revealed to Him with all His glory, power and majesty. At first, I am sure that Isaiah is consumed as this vision unfolds, but then He realizes what He is dealing with here.

Isaiah was consumed with his unworthiness before the holy God – 6:5-7

Isaiah 6:5-7

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for

- Personal confession and dread of sin
 - Notice Isaiah's response
 - I am a man of unclean lips
 - Notice he talks of his lips.
 - His lips not only represent his words but also the actions and attitudes of his heart.
 - The words we say reveal what is in our heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 says

“The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it.”

- He is saying I am dead
 - First of all, I have seen God, and that is a cause for death.
 - Second, I am dead because I am a sinner in the presence of the Holy God.

Illustration: Have you ever been caught red-handed and there was no way out but to acknowledge your wrongdoing and face the consequences?

- Job had a similar reaction when he had a conversation with God.

Job 42:5 – 6

My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes”

- The Apostle John in the book of Revelation had a similar response when He saw God in a vision as well.

Revelation 1:17

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last."

- How do we view ourselves in light of knowing the Holy God?
- By what standard are we measuring sin in our lives?
 - Are we comparing ourselves to other Christians?
 - Do we say I am not as bad as that person, so therefore I must be spiritual and right with God?
 - Or do we measure ourselves to the divine standard of God's holiness, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit?
 - Are we seeing sin as God sees sin in our lives?
 - Do we agree with God about our sin, or are we merely sorry we got caught?

Illustration: Getting a ticket for a traffic violation

- We try to justify it.
- We are sorry we got caught.
- In reality, if we are honest, we have broken the law many times before; we by the grace of God were not caught or punished at that time.
- We must admit that what we did was wrong and pay the consequences.
- We live in a society that doesn't want to pay for the consequences of sin.
 - We see it in the church
 - Divorce
 - Financial problems

- Conflicts with other Christians
- We don't want to admit our sin and deal with it as God wants us to deal with it. We certainly don't like telling others of the struggles we are having with sin, but the church is the very place to come and get help in overcoming our sin. That is why I am so thankful that we have the ministry of Celebrate Recovery in our church.
- Public confession and dread of sin.
 - As the prophet of the nation of Israel, Isaiah realized the sinfulness of the people whom he represented before God.

Isaiah 6:5b

5b And I live among a people of unclean lips

- He was grieved before God over the spiritual condition of the nation he served as the prophet between them and God.
- Personal forgiveness of sin.
 - God did for Isaiah what He could not do for himself
 - God saw the human condition of His people and provided a way of redemption and forgiveness
 - God is a just judge. Sin cannot go unpunished
 - Jesus is the one that took our punishment upon Himself so that we could be forgiven by God, and stand justified before Him..
 - Isaiah was genuine in his confession of sin and was willing to turn away from it.

I John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 51:1-2

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

- God sent the seraph to take the live burning coal off the altar
 - Maybe this was an altar representing the altar used for burnt offerings, as Leviticus 6:12 tells us.
 - Maybe this was the altar of incense used in the Holy Place to continually burn incense in the tabernacle. (Exodus 30:1; 7 – 9)
 - Whichever this was, Isaiah's sins were forgiven and taken care of by the seraph with the live coal touching Isaiah's lips.

Application: Do we take note of how bad our sin is when our sin is presented to us by a Holy God?

Transition: Now that Isaiah has seen the Lord in All of His holiness, power and glory, he has seen his unworthiness before God because of sin. God forgives him and calls him into service.

Isaiah responded to the call for service after seeing God for who He is – 6:8

Isaiah 6:8

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

- We see the triune God asking a question and giving him an opportunity to respond.
- God calls for a response to our worship
 - Worship is our response to seeing and knowing who God is.
 - When we gather to worship on Sunday mornings, it is all about what we can give to Him. The byproduct is how God changes us through our response to what we experience when we worship Him.
 - I believe that when we come together around God’s Word and the music and all that is involved in worship (and there are many components to worship), I believe God wants us to respond to what He reveals to us about Himself.
 - Part of that response is to fulfill what God has called us to do.
 - Isaiah was now cleansed and prepared to do the ministry that God laid out for him in verses 9 – 13.
 - God has created each and every one of us to know God and to know how He created us and to use the talents and spiritual gifts that God has given to serve and glorify Him.
- God calls us to fulfill what He created us to be.
 - Each one of us has a calling from God for our lives
 - Secular or Ministry Employment
 - All are important and the same.
 - We should be finding out more and more as we get to know God, what our role in His kingdom is.

Ephesians 1:4

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

2 Timothy 2:21 – 22

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

- When we surrender to our lives as daily sacrifices for God to use, then we have a joyful relationship with a holy God and a life that God will bless.
- Writer Jerry Bridges recorded this memorable prayer of submission in his book, *The Joy of Fearing God*: “**Lord, I am willing. To receive what you give; To lack what you withhold; To relinquish what you take; To suffer what you inflict; To be what you require; And to do what You send me to do.**”

Experiencing God Devotional by Henry Blackaby

Jeremiah 33:3

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know

Too often, we settle for much less than what God wants to do through us. We read in **Jeremiah 32:27**: “**I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for Me?**” and we answer, “No Lord.” Yet, when we face difficult situations, we begin to qualify our belief in God and lower our expectations of what God will do. It is one thing to believe God could perform a miracle in the Bible, or a thousand years ago, or even in the life of a friend; it is quite another matter to wholeheartedly believe God can do anything He chooses to do in our lives!

When almighty God speaks to us, what we do next proves what we believe about Him, regardless of what we say.

God revealed to Moses His plan to orchestrate the greatest exodus in human history, and He wanted to use Moses to accomplish it. Moses responded by arguing with God! Moses was overwhelmed by what he heard and began to make excuses for why he could not participate in God’s activity. Moses would have readily acknowledged his belief in God’s power, he simply did not believe God could do His miraculous work through his life. Moses’ argument with God limited his ministry for the rest of his life (Exod. 4:13-16).

Do you sense there may be far more that God wants to do through your life than what you have been experiencing? Ask God to show you what it is, then be prepared to respond in faith and obedience to what He tells you.

God says to all of us. “Who will go for us?” Can you respond in full surrender – “Here I Am. Send Me.

- God calls us to faithfully share His message, whether it is received or not
 - To summarize verses 9 – 13, God tells Isaiah to go and warn the nation of impending judgment from this Holy God unless they turn from their sins. God makes it clear to Isaiah that they will not listen, but Isaiah is to go and share what God has said.
 - God says He will bring judgment on the Jewish people, but that a remnant (verse 13), will remain to start over and grow the nation again after God's judgment. Even in judgment, God shows His kindness and compassion to preserve His nation and creation.

Application: Are we so in awe of God in His holiness and awesome attributes, that it motivates us to love and serve Him in ways that glorify Him and promote His greatness?

Key Thought: The way you worship and serve God is based on how you view God and how you view sin!

Questions to Ponder this Week

1. How do you view God today?
2. How do you view your sin today?
3. How do you respond to the call of the holy God upon your life today?

Let's pray.