

Isaiah 6:1-8

Introduction

- I. God is more often referred to as the “holy one” than any other attribute
- II. When creatures come in direct contact with God, it’s his holiness that they are most aware of

The Passage

I. The Context

During reign of King Uzziah in Israel (around 740BC)

- A. A time of political and economic prosperity
- B. A time of spiritually disobedience and unfaithfulness

II. Isaiah’s vision

A. Description of God (v. 1)

- 1. Seated on a throne = he is the true authority, king of Israel
- 2. High and exalted = his authority is over all
- 3. Train of his robe filled temple

God doesn’t dwell in a temple. Heaven and earth cannot contain him

B. Description of the Seraphs (v. 2-4)

- 1. =Awesome, magnificent creatures
- 2. Covering faces and feet
= Humility and reverence before God:
- 3. Powerful voices (v. 4)

And even they don’t feel worthy to leave themselves exposed to God’s presence

D. Their words

- 1. Earth is full of his glory (they have a God-centered view)
- 2. The LORD Almighty: LORD = Yahweh
- 3. “holy, holy, holy”
repeated for emphasis = completely, perfectly holy
See also revelation 4-5

III. God’s holiness

A. Definition = “set apart”

God is totally set apart/distinct from everything else in creation

He is one of a kind, incomparable, in a class all by himself

B. Specifically: God is set apart from sin and evil

Holy = 100% pure, perfect, without a trace/hint of sin and evil

C. The “warm” side of God’s holiness

He’s perfect, pure, good, beautiful

He loves everything that right, good, pure, lovely

1 Jn: “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5)

D. The “severe” side of God’s holiness

- 1. He is utterly intolerant of sin and evil in all of its forms

Hab 1:13: Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong
Holy = He hates everything that is wrong, false, bad, impure
God is not neutral towards sin; he is passionately concerned with it

2. Wrath is the theological term for God's passionate concern regarding sin
 - a. = his steady, consistent opposition to sin and evil (see Romans 1:18ff)
His holy wrath leads him to judge sin and evil (Adam and Eve, flood, tower of Babel, Israel in Isaiah's day, etc.)
 - b. God's wrath is not a contradiction of his goodness, it's an expression of his goodness (think of C.S. Lewis' depiction of Aslan)

E. Isaiah's response to holiness

v. 6: Woe to me! I am sinful!

He recognizes the infinite gap between God's holiness and his sin

F. God's solution to his holiness and Isaiah's sin

v. 6-7: a burning coal that atones for Isaiah's sin

v. 8: Isaiah accepts God's forgiveness and commits himself to God's purposes

Conclusion

I. We are called to a posture of FEAR with God

A. Fear = reverence, awe, respect for God's holiness, awareness of the gap

B. Our culture has lost this posture. We've grown casual with God

We assume God doesn't care about sin as much as he used to in the OT

C. We've grown casual with our own sin

D. But an implication of God's holiness is that we are called to be holy

"Be holy for I am Holy" (Lev 19:2, 1 Pt 1:16)

Paul: "let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of fear for God (2 Cor 7:1)

We pursue holiness not as a way of trying to bridge the gap between us and God but out of a desire to imitate and please him

II. We are called to a posture of FAITH with God

A. God has done what we could never do: solved the problem created by his holiness and our sin by sending Jesus as our atoning sacrifice

B. The great exchange at the cross

1. Our sin is transferred to Jesus on the cross and God's holy wrath is poured out on him

2. Jesus' perfect righteousness is transferred to us when we put our faith in him

C. Because of Christ, we can stand before a holy God pure and blameless

D. We are called to abandon the ways we try to fix our own sin, and called to simply put our faith in what Christ did for us

1. One strategy is to minimize sin (by comparing ourselves to others or by covering our sin in activity and busyness)

2. Another strategy is to make up for our sin (by trying harder or pursuing success, or by doing some form of penance)

E. We are called to put our faith in Christ alone

Discussion Questions

1. How did Sunday's sermon enhance or add to your understanding of what it means for God to be holy?
2. How do we fit the idea of having an appropriate "fear of lord" (Phil 2:12) together with the idea that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn 4:18). In what sense are we to fear the Lord and in what sense does perfect love cast out fear?
3. Discuss the statement made during Sunday's sermon: "God's wrath is not a contradiction of his goodness; it's an expression of his goodness." Do you agree or disagree?
4. On Sunday we discussed how we can be tempted to solve the problem of our own sin apart from Christ by either trying to minimize our sin or make up for our sin. What strategies are you tempted to pursue (e.g. minimizing sin by comparing ourselves to others, minimizing sin by trying to cover up our sin with busyness, making up for our sin by trying harder or pursuing accomplishment in other areas of life, or making up for sin by doing some form of penance.)?