

Isaiah 6 - Responding to a Holy God

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[0 : 00] So let's read Isaiah chapter 6 verses 1 to 7. And with two they were flying and they were calling to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.

The whole earth is full of his glory. At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

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

With it he touched my mouth and said, See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.

[1 : 34] Blake, you're very welcome this morning. Come on ahead. Blake's wife, Devon, is teaching this morning in with the little ones, so it's great to have you.

Blake is a student at Southern Baptist Seminary in the US, and he's been part of the team this week helping us out. So I'm going to pray for you and for us, and then preach.

Okay, very good. Father God, we thank you for your people, your servants, and we thank you for Blake. We pray for him and for us that we would know the work of your Spirit in our lives, so that as we hear your words, it would be like a power at work within us, changing us and helping us to grasp and see how great you are, how holy you are, and all that you have done for us in Christ.

Father, help us. May we not leave this building without an encounter with you, the risen Almighty God.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks, Blake. Thank you so much, Johnny. Let me get my stuff up here.

[2 : 57] I want to dump things out on the floor. It's an absolute honor to be with you all this morning. We've had a great week. It's just as we've read this text, and I think if we're all honest, this is a very odd piece of Scripture right here.

I feel like this is so unlike, not I feel, I know, this is so unlike anything we experience on a regular basis. To the point, I think, where a lot of times when we read texts such as these, it's almost as if, you know, did this really happen?

Is this real? Is this myth? Is this legend? Or are these historical realities? And obviously, we believe them to be, and they are historical realities, but the way this vision occurs with Isaiah is so lofty, it is so high, that I believe that we are supposed to, through this text, be brought to a point, just as Johnny said, where we would encounter God.

And so, I want to tell you today, my main application for us in preaching this sermon is just that we would look at who our God is and be absolutely blown away with His power, with His holiness, and with His grace, and with His holiness what He has given us.

And so that is what I hope that you were able to get today from this text in just seeing how exalted our God is. And I really want to examine it in really three sections.

[4 : 38] We'll look at the vision, what Isaiah sees, we'll talk about that. Then we'll talk about the creatures, the seraphim and Isaiah as well, their reaction to the Lord.

And then we'll talk about the grace of God. And so, as we see right here, as you've read, it talks about King Uzziah. And so Isaiah, living around 700 years before the birth of Christ.

That's a long time, long time ago. It seems so far removed from us. He's living so long ago, and Isaiah, this king who had been living for a while, had died, so it's probably a really anxious period of what's going to happen next, what's going to happen in our nation.

And Isaiah is in here, not sure completely why, probably to worship, probably to minister, as a prophet. And Isaiah, this righteous man, as he comes in, sees something like no one has ever seen.

He sees the Lord sitting upon a throne. And I want to pay close attention to all these details in the vision because I think they're very important.

[5 : 48] One, that He is on a throne. He's not on a chair. That our God does not simply sit at a chair like we do in a room. He's not just sitting at the head of a dinner table.

He's not just the CEO who is the board of directors who has an important position. That our God is the sovereign King of the universe. And He is upon His throne ruling with complete control over His entire creation.

And He is so high and lifted up. I just love the way this pictures Him here on this throne lifted up. I mean, if you think about atheism, materialism, which we've encountered a lot this week in Ireland, same in the United States, a lot of secular thinking going on.

And the bottom line of atheism and materialism and naturalism, the bottom line is that this throne in heaven doesn't exist. That there is no God that we are accountable to.

But this passage tells us there is a God who is on His throne, who is the judge, who is the Lord, and we are completely accountable to Him because He has created us.

[7 : 04] It says the train of His robe filled the temple. You know, in old times when kings would be sitting on their throne, they would have these huge, ridiculously long trains on their robes as they sat.

And the thing is, when you're sitting in one of these huge robes, it's hard to move around for the kings in the old times. Because they didn't have to move around because everyone was at their disposal.

Everyone was serving them. And I think this is the picture we have of God here of not that He can't move because He can, but that everyone is in submission to Him. Everyone is in service to Him.

Because why? Because He is the King. And we are mere subjects. And then we see these seraphim. You may have read the seraphs in your translation.

Same thing. And I just find these angelic creatures so fascinating. Because, you know, every time, when we think about angels, I think a lot of times we're tempted to think very, you know, maybe they're pretty or they're cute or they have a halo on their head.

[8 : 18] But every time we see angels in Scripture, it's terrifying. People are scared. They're scared for their lives. And here we have these seraphim.

Literally, their name means burning ones. That these creatures are so powerful that the way that Isaiah is describing them is they're on fire.

And this is not even God. These are God's servants. And these seraphim, these burning ones who are powerful, who their sole purpose is to worship God forever.

It says that they're covering themselves. They have six wings, but with four of them, they're covering their bodies. They're covering their face. They're covering their feet.

Why are they doing this? You know, if we think to Exodus, when Moses encounters that burning bush, what does God command? He commands, take off your sandals, for the place you are standing is holy ground.

[9 : 23] When Joshua, in Joshua chapter 5, encounters the commander of the armies of the Lord, who seems to be God Himself, this commander of the armies of the Lord says, take off your sandals, for the place you are standing is holy.

So this is the presence of God, and the feet are a humble part of the body. So these seraphim, they're shielding themselves, and they're shielding their faces, because the sheer holiness and glory of God, they can't even behold to look at it.

And these are angels. So we see their reaction. We've not even got to the Lord's power. This is just these angels. And they say to each other this beautiful statement, which we're all so familiar with, and we sing in songs, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies.

That's what this means. He's the commander of armies. This is a powerful God. This is not a God you can tame. This is not a God you can bring under your control.

That He is over all, and He is not simply holy. He is not simply doubly holy. He is holy, holy, holy. And this repetition is just simply lifting up God to a level that is above everything else.

[10:45] And so we talk about holiness, but what does that even mean? You know, what does that even mean? What does it even mean to be holy? And the way I think it's really fit to describe it is it comes really with two qualities.

One is a quality of morality. In that God is morally perfect. He is completely, His existence is moral perfection.

There is no stain. There is no dust. There is no speck to His character. But He is flawless in who He is. And there's a relational quality. Into where our God, the King, is separate from His entire creation.

That He is with us, but at the same time, He is not like us. He is transcendent. He is so far above us. And this is what we see of our God in His holiness.

And so just as we see this vision, I know it's like, wow, this is so abstract. But I think we need to try to picture these things in our minds. Because every time God shows up in Scripture, it seems the way He is described, words cannot do it justice.

[11:58] But here we have the Lord. Holy, holy, holy. Then we see the reaction here. We've already seen the reaction of the seraphim to Him.

They're speaking and saying His praises. But it says that when this angel speaks, it says in verse 4, the foundations of the thresholds shook.

I mean, what if this room, if an angel came in this room, and the room just began to shake to a point where you think the building is going to fall? The doorposts are going to give way that these angels are so powerful.

And so you think these angels are powerful. What about the power of the one sitting on this throne? This is their reaction to Him. These are their words.

But when we think about the Word of God, it is to a level that is so unimaginably above this. I loved you read 2 Corinthians 4, 6. God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ.

[13:07] It literally takes the very Word of God to save us. His power. That when God speaks, even...

Oh, and I love this in the Bible. Inanimate matter responds to Him. That creatures that we would... Things that we would not...

Not creatures. Things that we call not living respond to God. One of my favorite passages in the Scripture is Psalm 97, 5.

It says that the mountains melt like wax before the Lord. When you think about Mount Everest and how many people try to climb up to the top of that hill and post their flag and take a picture and they pay so much money to go and they go to this mountain in this majestic piece of God's creation. It's terrifying. I don't know if there was a movie a while back called Everest. And I don't know if any of you have seen that, but it's terrifying at points how this mountain can just swallow you.

[14:13] It's so great. And so many people have died simply at the hand of this mountain. And this is a mere piece of God's creation.

A mere piece of His power. And when God, He approaches Mount Everest, it's just like a candle melting in His way. This is our God. We think about Jesus when He's coming into Jerusalem and the disciples are proclaiming Him.

Hosanna, Hosanna! And the Pharisees rebuke them and try to quiet them. Jesus says, if you quiet them, even the rocks will cry out. And I just love this about how the creation responds to God.

And so when thinking about this, I mean, how in the world is a mere human going to fare in God's presence? I would say it's going to be quite startling.

That's what we see in Isaiah, of Isaiah here. I just want to read these words again. That this fountain, the temple is shaking. It's filled with smoke.

[15:19] I believe it's filled with the very glory of God. And in verse 5, Isaiah makes this statement. And I said, Woe is me, for I am lost.

Your translation may say ruined. Cut off. For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

Why? Why is this His response? He says, For my eyes have seen the King. My eyes have seen the Lord of hosts. You see, this is what happens when we encounter God.

If you have truly encountered God, this is your first response. As you realize exactly who you are. And this is what Isaiah is realizing here.

You know, I find in life that about the time I get of one sin under control by the power of the Holy Spirit, God reveals to me something else about myself. Well, now you've got this, but look at this pride you have over here.

[16:27] Look at this, a little bit of hatred in your heart towards this person. And as He reveals these things to us, we experience this godly guilt that sometimes it's really debilitating.

And the conviction is strong and we're discouraged because, oh, we're so imperfect compared to God. But can you imagine not having a taste, but all of your sin revealed to you at once?

And I believe this is what Isaiah is experiencing right here. He is seeing the fullness of his cursed nature before God because he is standing and seeing himself in the reflection of God's glory and he is, what he would say, worthless.

Woe is me! He's saying, I'm cursed! He's saying, I'm going to die! Death is the condemnation right here before this god. I'm lost.

I'm cut off. I'm ruined. And I love what he says. This is so telling of who we are born in our sin. He says, I'm a man of unclean lips. Just as these seraphim are crying out, holy, holy, holy, Isaiah is saying, I'm not worthy to say what those angelic creatures are saying.

[17:44] I'm not worthy to even speak. I'm not worthy to even look. The only thing I deserve is death before this god because he is so far above me.

You know, I remember when I was seven years old, before then, the previous two years, so I'm obviously very young, I was five and six years old, my parents were continually telling me about the gospel and I knew that I needed it.

I knew that was right. I knew there was a god and I knew I needed to be saved, but I just didn't really understand. I just didn't really understand sin and my dad kind of recognized that and so he kind of put it off.

He said, you know, let's wait, let's see until you truly understand this. I remember when I was seven years old, it was some night, it was in February and I was walking down the hall just a regular night. Nothing special had happened that night. I walked in my bathroom, I shut the door and I remember when I walked in that room, I don't know what happened, but all of a sudden everything that I had ever heard about Scripture, specifically about sin, made sense to me and I remember being terrified in that bathroom because I finally understood exactly what my sin is going to bring forth and I realized I was destined for hell.

[19:08] I knew it and I started weeping and so my dad and mom had heard me in the bathroom and I was crying and I remember just but I knew my dad had taught me if you call on the name of the Lord, if you call on the name of Jesus and what He has done, you will be saved and so I didn't waste any time.

I'm going straight for it. I'm crying, Lord, would you save me? And I remember I was still crying because I remember it was just emotional. I mean, of me recognizing this and remember we went in the living room and we celebrated and it was great but it didn't happen apart from me coming undone.

And that is the truth for all of us. To experience salvation, God first has to bring us to a point where we are undone, where we recognize who we are before Him.

This room is full in all of us of idolatry that we probably don't even know we have. Of lies that we've told. Of unfaithfulness in our thoughts to our spouses.

In coveting others. And oh, we could go on and on. I don't have to speak of these things because we know, you know personally where you struggle. You know the sin that easily besets you.

[20:24] And even in your mind right now, you go straight to it. To the sin that you struggle with. And we know these things. And an encounter with this holy God reveals them.

We can't hide. We can't hide from Him. And His omnipresence, His omniscience, and Him knowing all things. And just I want to say for a believer, if you have recognized your sin and put your faith and trust in Christ, there is something to holiness and seeking holiness that produces something that nothing else can.

You know, we always need to be reliant on the grace of God. If you've been to any of the talks this week, we talked about grace alone. And as part of the Tim team, as part of the Bible talks that we're given.

But I'm convinced that the only thing that will draw you back to the grace of God is seeking to be holy. Not because you can earn your salvation. Obviously, that's impossible.

But as we seek to live a holy life and we seek to tame our tongues better, as we seek to constrain what we're watching on television, because we want to honor God with what our eyes are seeing. [21 : 38] And when we're doing all these things, the more we seek holiness, the more we're going to realize how much in need of the grace of God we are. And I'm convinced that seeking the holiness of God is the only thing that will continually draw you to your knees so that we will see our need for grace.

And so as we're thinking about all these things, I'm going to make, you know, just a connection here about Christ. I want to give four examples of Christ in the New Testament and responses of things to Him.

You know, obviously we see that Jesus says the rocks will cry out if the disciples don't. We see that, you know, when He is out on the water with His disciples and there's a storm brewing and they're crying out to Him because they think they're going to die if the storm is so bad.

Jesus simply speaks and the entire sea is like probably a sheet of glass. No storm, no wind, it's just quiet.

We see creation responding to Jesus this way. When Jesus encounters demons in Mark, there's at one point where this demon shrieks out and he says, what are you to do with us?

[22 : 56] Oh, Son of the Most High God, have you come to torment us before the day of judgment? The demons recognize who Jesus is.

The demons recognize this Holy One of God and are worried that He is going to send them to hell. We see Peter when he calls Peter. I find this one of the most fascinating places in Scripture.

Jesus gets in the boat with Peter and says, Peter, cast your nets. And what does Peter say? He says, Lord, we've been fishing all day.

We ain't caught anything. You know? But, you know, if you tell me to put the nets out, I will. And so Peter puts these nets out and what does he do? He brings in this huge haul of fish.

And what's Peter's response? Does he say, oh, wow, that's great. Or, man, this is exciting. Oh, we're going to eat for a month. Oh, I'm not going to have to fish for a month. He doesn't say any of those things.

[24 : 00] He sits there and he says, depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Oh, Lord. Peter's interaction with Jesus is seeing his sin.

And then I say, one of the most intense encounters with Christ in Revelation 1 when John sees Christ, the Lamb of God. And John says, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as though I was dead. You know, what is so beautiful about this, and I just find it to be one of the greatest conundrums, is that Jesus is this King.

He is this Lord of hosts. Specifically in John, chapter 12, we don't just know this from the canon of Scripture. I mean, if you think of Scripture as a whole, we know Jesus is the Word became flesh. He's the exact imprint, the exact radiance of God according to Hebrews 1. He is Colossians 1.15, the Creator of all things. All things are created by Him, for Him, through Him.

[25 : 07] But we, not only know that from the whole witness of Scripture, but we know this because John, in his Gospel, in chapter 12, quotes Isaiah 6.

Specifically, he quotes verses 8-13. I won't read those, but in this, Jesus quotes this Scripture.

John records it. And after the Scripture of Isaiah 6 is recorded, John says, something very interesting. He says, Isaiah spoke of this because he saw His glory.

John 12.41. And contextually, John is talking about Christ. And what I want you to know today is this same King, this same Lord of hosts, walked on this earth.

And we are accountable to Him. And this is what I say in about every single evangelistic conversation I have. And I've said it this week several times. When I've talked about who Jesus is, basically it comes to this point.

[26 : 12] I say, what are you going to do with Jesus? Because our lives demand a response. No one encounters this God and leaves without responding.

There's a response that has to be to Jesus. And I ask you today, what has been the response in your life? Have you recognized this sin that this passage is talking about?

Has it gripped you like this? So that you need an atonement of some sort. You need a Savior. How are we going to respond to Jesus?

We see then this grace of God. In verse 6, it says, One of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal. He had taken with tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.

[27 : 12] I mean, can you imagine Isaiah's rejoicing at this point, realizing he's not going to die. He's not cursed anymore. The Lord is telling him, You're forgiven. But how in the world does this happen?

How is God justified in doing this? And I think we know this answer. But isn't it crazy that 700 years before Jesus was even born, God's plan in sending His Son is so sure that He can forgive Isaiah on the spot because of His faith.

He can forgive him because the work of Christ is coming. And what is so crazy about who Jesus is is that God becomes a man.

And Christ, being fully man, fulfills these traits of holiness that you and I never can. We just never can.

But we see Jesus' entire life, we see the moral perfection, we see it in Him honoring His parents. In the way He treats others.

[28 : 25] The way He responds to those who cannot help themselves, who cannot do anything, who are poor, who have leprosy. We see the way that He defeats Satan in the wilderness.

Forty days fasting, overcoming those three temptations. We see Him overcoming temptation in the garden. As He poured out Himself to God in prayer that He might be able to go to the cross.

And we see not a speck in Christ's character as a man. And He does all this and He dies. And I want to say this this morning.

Let me be honest with you about something so long in my life up until I was about probably 18, 19 years old. My dad's a pastor.

I've heard the gospel millions of times. Right? But there came a point in my life where I knew Christ. I was following Him.

[29 : 28] But there came a point of recognition when I was about 18 or 19 years old. I'm so used to hearing the gospel that I forgot how ridiculous it is. Of how crazy what we believe is.

We literally believe God became a man. He lived a sinless life. He was crucified on a cross becoming a curse for our sin and bearing the wrath of God.

And we believe He was raised from the dead. We believe He was raised from the dead. And that is ridiculous. That is crazy.

And I think it's fine to admit that is really hard to believe. I would be lying to you if I said I didn't have doubts about these things.

But I'm trusting in God because I know this is the reality. I know He's real. But I think we never need to let it be lost on us. How amazing the resurrection of Christ is in His life.

[30 : 29] And that it was His blood that was shed for us that is the only reason that Isaiah can be forgiven right here. In simply throwing himself to the mercy of God.

And abiding in the righteousness of Christ. I don't know where everyone is in this room today. But my prayer is you understand your sin. That you're not getting out of it.

There's no way around it. There's not enough charity you can do. I had a guy tell me this week I tried to do a lot of charity and I had to tell him that's great but it's not going to save your soul. It won't.

He's commanded us to repent and believe the Gospel. Believe what Christ has done. Just to mention something about this coal. Puts the coal on his lips.

This hot flaming coal and I love what Charles Spurgeon some of you may be familiar with him some of you may have no idea who that is and that's perfectly fine. It doesn't matter. But I want to read this quote by Spurgeon.

[31 : 32] He says the Lord who is a consuming fire can only be fitly served by those who are on fire whether they be angels or men.

These angels are burning but you know what the truth is for us? We can only serve God when we have truly been had that moment of salvation that we read in 2 Corinthians 4 where God has shown into our hearts and He has set us on fire for His glory that we would be filled with zeal and love for Him and love for others to proclaim the hope that is in this.

Even as we've been here there have been things happened this week that are just the epitome of living in a cursed world. And there's hurt and there's pain and there's anxieties and there's stress and there's sin in our lives but God has come to heal He's come to restore He has come to atone

for us.

And so my question today is maybe you have experienced this but maybe it's time to reflect again on how powerful our God is and ask am I living a life that is set on fire for the glory of God for this holy God and as I'll close I'll just mention this it doesn't stop here for Isaiah the Lord commissions him to go preach to go preach to a people he says who won't listen and the same is for us when we believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ he commissions us commissions us to love him with all his heart to abide in his grace but he commissions us to proclaim the gospel and so I pray today that you would be amazed by the holiness of our God the power of our God and that the rest of this week the rest of your life would be constrained by him and that with all your heart that because of his grace that you would live a life commissioned and sent just to please him and to tell others to tell everyone about this because a man being raised from the dead is not something to keep to ourselves would you pray with me this morning

Lord I just thank you so much you were so good to us oh God I thank you that we have this recorded for us to read just about oh your beauty we love you God we thank you that you have paid the penalty for our sin Lord I pray that you would save save and advance your kingdom God through these churches I pray for all the churches in this area and in this network God that you would use them to honor yourself that they would be holy and that at the last day because of Christ they would be presented holy and blameless before you Lord I pray all this in the name of Jesus Amen