

AM Isaiah 6:1-8 & John 12:20-33 "We want to see Jesus"

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[0 : 00] Let's now read God's word as we have it in the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 6 verses 1 to 8.!

Isaiah 6 verses 1 to 8.

! Isaiah chapter 6 verse 1.

In the year that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. And the train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings. With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one called to another, said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called.

[1 : 16] And the house was filled with smoke. 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. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. 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. Can we also turn now to John's Gospel. John's Gospel, chapter 12, at verse 20.

That's on page 1084 of the Pew Bible. John's Gospel, chapter 12, at verse 20. Page 1084.

[2 : 25] And we'll read verses 20 to 33. Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew.

Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me.

And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say?

[3 : 37] Father, save me from this hour? Father, but for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven.

I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, An angel has spoken to him.

Jesus answered, This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world.

Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. Amen. This is God's word. May his blessing be upon it. Let's... Like us to think for a little while about a verse that we find from the John reading that we took.

John chapter 12, verse 21. And it reads in our pew Bible that the Greeks who came to Philip asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

[4 : 57] We wish to see Jesus. At its most basic, we want to see Jesus. They had come to the festival at Jerusalem, and all the way from Greece.

And we don't know whether Jesus was in their minds when they arrived, but certainly this particular day he was. And we'll explain why that was the case.

I was recently reading about the hype that surrounds celebrities. And by this time, Jesus had become a celebrity in Jerusalem. Think about celebrities in our own day who give...

Who not only give concerts entertaining thousands of fans, but also an industry that produces what they call backstage passes. So that if a person gets a backstage pass in the presence or in the place where a celebrity is, they have the opportunity to meet that person after the big event finishes. And I was reminded about the backstage pass idea when I read about these Greeks who told Philip they would like to meet Jesus.

[6 : 11] Now we don't really know why they wanted to meet him. Or indeed, we don't even know if they ever really managed to do so.

We're not told that. But one thing we do know, this was just a day or so after Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on the donkey. And in the character of the king mentioned in Zechariah chapter 9, Behold, your king comes to you lowly and riding upon a donkey.

Rejoice, Jerusalem. And so Jesus doing that had fulfilled that Zechariah prophecy. But as he did so, so many people in Jerusalem suddenly began to sit up and pay attention to Jesus.

If they'd never done so before, now all of Jerusalem was aware that there was someone in their midst who claimed by his actions to be a king.

And they wanted to meet him. So they went to Philip. Sir, we want to see Jesus. So we don't really know, as I say, if they ever managed to do so.

[7 : 27] It could have been to ask him some questions about what he'd done the previous day when he rode into Jerusalem. Jesus was already a well-known public figure throughout Judea in his teaching ministry.

And in Galilee. And now he was, as I say, in a position of being acknowledged as the Messiah King. When he came into Jerusalem, the verses which the Jewish people recited and sang to him, were the verses from Psalm 118, where they say, Blessed is he who comes to us in the name of the Lord.

That was a verse relating to the Messiah King. Anyway, perhaps these God-fearing Greeks, who probably were proselytes, meaning they had converted to Judaism, and they were up for the festival, perhaps they came from somewhere like Thessalonica.

We know there were God-fearing Greeks in Thessalonica, in Greece, when Paul arrived there.

They were among the first people he spoke to. Wherever it was in Greece, we don't know.

But what I want to do this morning is I want to take their question. We would like to see Jesus.

Basically, we want to see Jesus and link it to the experience of salvation in two very important ways.

[8 : 53] But before we do that, just let's make a couple of points to clarify here how humans see Jesus Christ. First of all, there's this point.

Humans do not naturally want to see the Jesus of the Bible. Now, opinion polls in our day on which historical figure, sometimes you get this, people will say, which historical figure would you like to go back in time and meet?

You know, those sorts of things you get, surveys and polls. And sometimes in the category of a moral and spiritual example or a spiritual leader, Jesus appears.

But it's only as a teacher, it's only as a kind and nice guy, someone who was everything, a model of what they accept, everything that human beings should be in his behaviour, but in his capacity as a redeemer of sinners, a sinful human race.

No, he's not popular in that capacity. That's not why people who are outside of churches would like to see Jesus. And there's no reason to believe that the Jesus of the Gospels was a magnetic figure with regards to his physical appearance.

[10 : 18] Unlike the many paintings and religious icons that you can see as you go into the art gallery here in Edinburgh or wherever, where you find a Jesus who's got this halo and this radiance surrounding, ordinarily, normally in his lifetime, that was not the case.

There is one exception, of course, when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain with three of his disciples present. That was a very rare occurrence.

Normally, there was no halo, there was no radiance. There was a typical, fairly typical, Jewish man of around the early 30s who perhaps even looked older because there was said of him in John chapter 8 that he's not even 50.

And yet, has he seen Abraham? So, he may have looked a little older than 30. The prophet Isaiah writes in chapter 53 that the Messiah, when he came, would have no form or majesty.

Nothing about him that we should look at him and want to see more of him. No beauty that we should desire him, says Isaiah. And there's one from whom men hid their faces.

[11 : 37] He was despised and we did not respect him. So, those Bible verses represent the general human response to the Jesus of the Bible.

Rejection. And that was partly the reason why he was a man of sorrows because he came to his own people and his own things but his own people did not receive him.

So, that's the first point I want to make. That humans do not naturally want to see Jesus. There needs to be something done in our hearts first before we ever have that desire. As we were saying to the children, we need God's Holy Spirit to show us Jesus.

The second point I want to make is that the Jesus most people want to see is a Jesus of the human imagination. I used to think that it was a pity that we didn't know what Jesus looked like.

There have been attempts made. I think there's a little cameo mosaic thing which dates from the second century where somebody made a mosaic of a tile mosaic thing showing an image which is supposed to be Jesus.

[12 : 46] But whether it is or not, it's of no consequences. Because if we did have such a likeness of Jesus, it would quickly have become an idol and that would have broken the second commandment.

images such as we find in many different religions and even within Christendom itself, so-called. Sometimes you do get images. And of course, as I said, paintings.

Nature abhors a vacuum, as they say. And where people haven't found images of Jesus, they have filled that vacuum with their own self-devised ideas. According to the different cultures around the world.

It's like what I was saying to the children when they were showing them the different pictures. There are all sorts of suggestions made as to what these things might be. And similarly, people have thought the same about what Jesus looked like.

You know, or maybe he was this, maybe he was that. I remember seeing in various paintings a black Jesus and another painting, a brown Jesus, a yellow Jesus representing the Far East Asian races.

[13 : 52] And of course, a white Jesus, which is most commonly found. But we need to remember that Jesus' mission was to bring people of all nations to the Father.

And he does that not through a physical appearance that he has or had, but through the Gospel. It's no accident that Jesus is called the Word of God. It's through his powerful Word and the Spirit's power that he brings us to God.

Not through human charisma. Like so many of the so-called important people of our day would like it to be the case as regards them. As the Apostle Paul said, at one time, we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view.

Now we do so no longer. And yet, although he is no longer able to be seen with the physical eye, there are ways in which people need to see Jesus through their understanding if they are to know what it means to be saved.

And let's look at the time remaining at those particular ways for the next few minutes. My first major point about this statement, we want to see Jesus, is that the first thing we need to see is that he is God himself.

[15 : 15] He himself is God. In chapter 6 of the prophecy we read of Isaiah, we find the prophet is, says, I saw, on the year the king of Isaiah died, I saw the Lord.

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. The word for Lord here is the word which is not the personal name of God, but the master of the universe.

Idea. And high and lifted up, the train of his robe filled the temple. When Christians read the Isaiah passage, it doesn't always occur to them that the person whom Isaiah saw was actually Christ.

You may say to me, well, how do you know that, Colin? After all, there's no mention in the Bible there, in that passage of which particular person of the Trinity was in view, or indeed all of them.

Why am I saying if it was one particularly who was in view? Why am I saying it was Jesus? I've got two reasons for saying that it was Jesus. It was Christ that Isaiah saw.

[16:29] The first reason is this. The glory of God has to be mediated to sinners who see it, or else those sinners will die.

In other words, what I'm saying is no sinner, no person, in fact, I even doubt this is possible of a perfect human being. If a frail, finite, mortal person especially, were to see the glory of God, they would die.

This is what God himself said to Moses when Moses made the request in Exodus 33, 18. He says, please show me your glory. To which the Lord replied, man shall not see me and live.

Because what Moses wanted, he wanted to see God in his fullness. He wanted to see God in his essence, his glorious essence. And God's saying, you can't do that.

Because if I do that, if I let that happen, you will not live to tell the tale. This is what Isaiah himself was afraid of when he saw the vision in the temple.

[17:38] He knew the teaching of the Jews from the laws of Moses and where these words earlier was I mentioned recorded.

He knew those scriptures. And so when he saw the Lord, he thought, that's it. I'm going to die. Because he knew it was the Lord.

But he thought, he also knew that he probably would not live to tell the tale. He said, I'm lost. My eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts, the Lord of hosts. One thing is very clear, that the divine person he saw had to have the ability to mediate his glory in such a way that as a sinner, Isaiah would not die.

And there's only ever been one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus. We're told that in 1 Timothy. So, Christ Jesus himself, that is the first reason I put to you as to why Isaiah saw Jesus. And the second is that the Bible itself confirms it, that it was Jesus. In the passage we read in John 12, and if we look a little bit further on, John records the unbelief of the people of Jerusalem in Jesus' day.

[18:58] He says, this is why the prophet Isaiah says, he has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.

So that's Isaiah 6 quoted from. And then, then John says, Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory, Christ's glory, and spoke of him.

Sorry, just take a wee bit of water. So John is saying himself that this is, that whole passage there in John is about Jesus.

So John confirms that Isaiah saw Jesus in his divine person. And because Jesus is all about being a mediator between himself as God and the human race, that glory had to be mediated.

So, J.C. Ryle about that passage in John says, how anyone in the face of this evidence can say that Jesus Christ is not very God is not, is hard to understand.

[20:16] So, so I would say that before anyone is able to consider what Jesus has done for the world or what they, what he can do for us today, they must first acknowledge and see him in their mind's eye as the Lord God, as Yahweh who came from heaven's glory to redeem sinful humanity as Emmanuel.

That was one of his names. God with us. God is with us. That's not just a word of encouragement like moral support. Don't worry, I'm with you. I'll be thinking about you.

No, he was actually with us on the earth. The divine made human. The God man. So, he is the Lord God and when we come to worship as a church we're making an unspoken statement every time we enter this building.

We want to see Jesus, our creator, our God, the one who has the supreme right to our worship. We want to see him this morning or this evening as we worship.

We want to see him in the singing. We want to see him in the prayers. We want to see him in the preaching and the hearing of the word. And all of that's possible, as we say again, through the Holy Spirit.

[21:33] That's the Spirit's job is to highlight Jesus and to glorify Jesus, to show his glory to us through the word that is preached. Just to ask then at this point, have you seen Jesus in this way?

Have you in your life seen Jesus as the Lord God who was not happy to remain in heaven's glory but loved you so much, loved this world so much that he came and gave himself as a sacrifice for

our sins?

Have you seen him in this way? Thomas eventually saw him in this way and I don't mean our Thomas who's here today but I mean Thomas in John's gospel.

Towards the end of that gospel Thomas would not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead and Jesus came and showed him the wounds, showed him the evidence of death upon him and they knew that he had died and only God could raise him from the dead and he had told them that he would rise they hadn't believed it but now Thomas is faced with the evidence that he is risen and that he had died for him and the only response that he could make was my Lord and my God he got the penny dropped and he got the point has that penny dropped with us have we realised that Jesus the one who has ownership over our lives lordship that he is our Lord and our God second thing I think we need to see about Jesus is that and we've been kind of leaning towards it in everything I've said so far is that he is our sin bearer although he is the Lord God

Jesus left the throne of heaven to go to the cross of Calvary as we're told in Paul's letter to the Philippians I'll just read that from chapter 2 verses 6 to 8 being in very nature God yet he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross now there are those who know the story of Jesus so well especially they've been brought up in a Christian family or perhaps they've been to church and Sunday school as a child and I just want to give you because I think it's helpful to illustrate this a little bit of information about myself and I'm sorry it's about myself I wish it was about somebody else but it's about me and how I came to know the Lord because it has very much to do with this

[24 : 31] I remember growing up in Dumfries in one of the Church of Scotland congregations hearing all the Bible stories and especially about Jesus his life his death his resurrection however these things meant very little to me at the time think about those placards I was holding up those little pictures that's where it was I could look at each one of them and I knew what it was but I didn't know how to connect the dots as it were I didn't know how to connect them all together and I certainly didn't realise that this had anything to do with me any relevance to my life but I'm really grateful for that knowledge that was in my head as so much data if you like and I'm very grateful to those Sunday school teachers in that church who invested their time and energy every Sunday teaching myself and my peers the basic information about the Lord Jesus and about God in general so but all of this was simply being stored in my head as part of my culture and tradition never did I seriously think during those years as a child or a teenager

Jesus the son of God really came to earth lived a life of wonderful obedience to God and then went to the cross to pay for my sins that thought never occurred to me so I never felt challenged by the gospel that's the thing I was never challenged I would never have said in those days Jesus is my saviour it wasn't a personal matter for me but in my late teens as I saw later on the Lord allowed my life to reach a really low point and by that time I'd abandoned church going which I thought was just for kiddies and old folk and things like that people like that and so as a teenager of course you want to get out and do all the exciting things don't you the things that give you a buzz and so on but none of that really helped me I got I got to know the folks who came to this church initially through coffee bar evangelism downstairs and then through attending the six o'clock service

I couldn't attend the eleven o'clock service in those days because I wasn't awake by eleven o'clock sorry and the point I'm working up to share with you is that it was through reading God's word at home one night that I finally saw Christ for who he really was and that's the thing I was mentioning that's the whole point about saying Jesus reveals himself through his word that if we dare to pick up the Bible and I mean that if we dare to give the Bible the opportunity to get to us then the truth will communicate and that's what happened to me I picked up the Bible I started reading it and I realised that the God who had left the throne of heaven and come down to this earth had come for me this time it was personal and as I knelt by my bed I saw in my mind's eye the son of God hanging in the cross for my sake taking the punishment for my sins to himself and that night before that night was finished that evening was finished

I was aware that Jesus had died for my sins I knew was forgiven and that Jesus was my Lord and the message preached in this church had focused not only on the person and life of Jesus but on his cross and what it meant for the people in front of the preacher the challenge was there a challenge that I could not ignore and this thing you know the point about Jesus dying being at the

heart of the gospel drove Paul the apostle to say to the churches in Galatia he said to you foolish Galatians he was basically saying to them you're in danger of turning away to a false gospel because what they were doing was they were taking the centrality of Jesus on the cross Jesus Christ crucified they were taking him away taking that major truth away from the centre of the gospel and putting something else in its place and when you do that it doesn't matter what you put in its place good works other philosophies or whatever it might be if you take Christ away from the centre of the gospel Christ crucified you've got nothing it's not a gospel anymore Paul says it's another gospel it's a false gospel so he says to them you foolish Galatians and this is what he says who has bewitched you it was before your very eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as having been crucified and Paul was trying to get them to wake up to the fact of that centrality of the cross he was referring there to the by mentioning publicly portrayed he was referring to the Greco-Roman custom of using conspicuous placards to post news of things that were important where the public would see them I mean one such placard we know was put above the cross of Jesus this is the king of the Jews Jesus of Nazareth and Paul is saying that this personal gospel was preached in the hearing of the

[30 : 08] Galatians so powerfully that by the power of the Holy Spirit that it was as though someone was holding up a placard depicting Jesus on the cross as they heard the message they could not have missed it which is why there was no excuse to them if they turned to another gospel God had worked so powerfully in their lives and now they were in doctrinal danger they were in danger as a church so that that leaves the question as you hear the gospel as I hear the gospel what's happening in our mind's eye what are we seeing are we seeing Jesus and are we aware who Jesus is who came to be in that position in the first place and have you responded by coming to him in prayer and repentance and faith if you've not really done so you should do so today and you'll be assured that your sins are forgiven wiped clean and there'll be a new life for you in

Christ and all we need to do is to ask God Lord show me the Lord Jesus dying on the cross for my sins if that prayer is prayed it will be answered now as we conclude there's one more way in which we have a strong desire to see Jesus as believers and that is in his coming again when the Lord left this world he was taken to heaven and we read in Acts that a cloud hid him from their sight and the angels who saw the disciples looking up to heaven assured them they said this Jesus that you've seen go into heaven well come again in the same manner that you've seen him go and so God our father he wants us to anticipate the coming again of Jesus even though it may not be yet the disciples had to go and do a great work throughout the world of evangelization before they could then look up to the heavens and say Jesus is coming but they knew he was coming sometime this is the main point here we're serving him in a needy world with the gospel with one eye on the works of service he's prepared for us to do and the other eye on waiting for his son from heaven that's what

Paul says to Titus this is the blessed hope the appearing of our the glory of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ notice again his divinity again comes to the fore our great God and saviour Jesus Christ is coming back says Paul and we're told that when he comes every eye will see him even those who pierced him and all the peoples of the earth especially those who have not come to know him personally will mourn because of him now when he comes many will suddenly realise that their worst nightmare is about to come true because they'll realise exactly who Jesus is by that time if not before and that he's come to judge the world and Revelation 6 tells us they'll call on the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne and the wrath of the Lamb so the very last thing they will want to say is we want to see Jesus what they're actually saying is hide us from Jesus we don't want to see him he's the last person we ever want to see but for his own people his own sheep the Lord Jesus holds no terrors that same book of Revelation also tells us that the Lamb who is at the centre of the throne will be our shepherd he will lead us to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes for his own people the coming of Jesus is really blessed and there are no fear love has no fear perfect love casts out fear there is a godly we still will have the godly sense of reverence and worship and that kind of fear but not cringing fear and not slavish fear it will be a reverence for who he is and what he's done for us this is why we want to see Jesus and to be with him what about those Greeks who came to Jerusalem and who wanted to see Jesus we don't know what became of them but we do know that on the day of Pentecost not many days after that they were assembled in the city were told devout god seekers from every nation under heaven so that would include Greece

and those festivals the day of

Pentecost some Jews remained on after Passover for Pentecost and then went home who knows if they were still there or not but if they weren't they had another opportunity to learn more about Jesus when Paul Silas and Timothy took the gospel to Greece it was to Greeks that Paul said that they should seek God and feel their way toward him and find him because he is actually not far from each one of us so he says himself the Lord said to his Old Testament people you will seek for me and you will find me when you seek me with all of your heart Jesus is the way to God and so the most important question I could ask anybody is do you want to see Jesus perhaps your response would be I have seen Jesus I do see Jesus but if not know this that the fact question still remains to be answered in your life then your situation is very precarious and yet if you take him at his invitation when he says anyone who comes to me I will never turn away then we will see a Lord and loving saviour who gave up everything for us that we might be rich in his glory in his heavenly glory with his lordly presence not just now but forever let's just pray gracious lord we thank you for your word lord and we pray that that through the preaching of your word that we would see

[36 : 47] Jesus help us with the eye of faith to discern lord not only who you are in truth the lord god but also what you've done for us that you gave your life the son of god who loved me and who gave himself for me may we be able to say that each one and so bless our time as we together this morning as we come towards a conclusion and bless the time of fellowship which will follow this time of worship in Jesus name we pray amen we're going to conclude with a hymn and I think it's printed in the back of the sheet my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness as we