

The Holiness & Glory of God

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[0 : 01] Let's turn again for a wee while to the chapter we read in Isaiah chapter 6, a well-known chapter. We see Isaiah's vision of the Lord. It's just the first seven verses. I want to read them again.

Just read at the beginning, Isaiah chapter 6, and I'll read just the beginning. 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.

Now, in our own experience, we know that there are certain dates that are etched into our mind, into our memory, because of something wonderful or something awful that happened on that particular date.

Well, that was going to be true for this prophet Isaiah. He would never, ever forget the experience he had on this particular date.

He doesn't actually give us the date, but he tells us the time or he tells us the year on which this amazing experience occurred. It was the year that King Uzziah died, which would mean that it was round about 739 to 740 BC.

[1 : 22] It had been a great time for Judah, the reign of Uzziah. He reigned for about 52 years, and it was a time of prosperity. It was a time when Judah prospered and indeed expanded under his leadership.

He was a good king, and most of his reign was one of spiritual well-being and a time, as we say, of national prosperity.

But good and all, though King Uzziah was, sadly things didn't end too well for him, because he, as sometimes can happen, when people get on really well and when people really begin to prosper and where everything you touch seems to be going well, and that's how it was during his reign, he became, we're told, he became proud.

And one time we find him going into the temple to offer incense on the altar of incense to the Lord. Now, he was not allowed to do that.

It was only the priests who were allowed to offer the incense. And even although he was the king, we read about this in Chronicles, some of the priests tried to stop him, and I'm sure it would have been very difficult for them to go and try and stop the king.

[2 : 48] But he was determined. And they argued with him and reasoned with him that what he was doing was forbidden by God, but he wouldn't listen to them. And he insisted. And God struck him with leprosy.

And he became a leper until the day of his death. And, in fact, he had to go and live in isolation in another house. And his son Jotham became kind of co-regent in the latter years of his reign.

So, although he had a very good reign and he was a good man, pride got the better of him. And it's something we've always got to guard against, particularly when things are going well.

Because sometimes we move from a dependence on God to depending on ourselves. And beginning to take credit for how things are by thinking that we ourselves have managed this.

God warned Israel and he said, Don't ever say, My own arm got me this. Don't ever say that. He said, It is me who gives you everything.

[3 : 52] I give you the abilities. I give you the power. I sometimes just give it to you, what you get. So we've always got to remember that. We've always got to guard against that.

And that's what happened to this king Uzziah. And God every so often will display his wrath or display his displeasure regarding holy things.

He did it here with Uzziah. He did it with another man whose name was very like Uzziah, Uzzah. Remember when David was taking the ark back and Uzziah went to steady the ark and he put his hand on it and he was struck down dead instantly.

You see, God is to be feared. We find Aaron's sons going to offer when they were the worst of drink and God smote them. He killed them.

We find in the very early church, Ananias and Sapphira lying before God. God killed them. And these were very, there were these sort of things where I made a huge impression upon people, displaying that God is absolutely holy and that we have to exercise fear and awe before him.

[5 : 13] God is a God who is so long-suffering and he displays that long-suffering to us all the time. But every so often, God has revealed his displeasure in these sort of ways.

And it's this holiness of God that Isaiah comes to discover on this particular date. And it's, as it says, 739 to 740 BC.

And it tells us here that he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. And this picture that Isaiah has of the Lord shows that the Lord is above everyone else.

He is Lord of the temple. He is Lord of the nations. He is Lord of the generations. He is Lord of the universe. Everything. There is no one higher.

He is exalted above every other king and above every other throne. And this must have been a great encouragement to Isaiah because Isaiah's ministry was a ministry to a succession of kings.

[6 : 20] And Isaiah often had to appear before kings. And to have met the king or given this vision of the king of kings would have had a profound effect upon him.

And given him a sense of, while still being respectful of earthly kings, of saying that no human king or earthly king is of any major significance compared to the king of glory.

And so Isaiah sees the Lord of glory high and lifted up, reigning over all others. And we see that the train of his robe filled the temple.

Now, I suppose to a certain extent what you think of is of a wedding. And you think of the train from the bride from her wedding dress.

And sometimes a train comes out like this. And it can be very... Sometimes you've seen royal weddings or something. There's this massive flowing out from the gown behind. And you think, you're sure, my word, that looks very, very impressive.

[7 : 36] Well, I think the idea that is caught here is that it... If you imagine coming in here and there's a wedding and the bride, her gown and the train flowing out is over all the seats and it's up into the gallery and it's draped over there, you'd say, what is that?

It would just sort of take your breath away. Well, this is kind of what Isaiah is seeing. And it's giving us this display that God is Lord of everything.

His glory is everywhere. He fills everything. You see, today we're not able to... Or we're not... We're not stopping to reflect and to see it as it is.

But that's how it still is. His glory is filling everywhere. But Isaiah was given this vision to see it in a really graphic way where it had such an impact upon him.

And above him stood the seraphim. Now, this is a heavenly being that we don't really come across unless there is a similar description given to us in Revelation, whether it's a seraphim or not.

[8 : 46] These flying creatures, they can speak, they have hands, they have feet, and obviously they are ready to do whatever the Lord asks them. Now, you know, sometimes you see pictures of artists have painted pictures and some of the great artists have painted pictures and they have these little flying...

They're like little babies flying around. It's like flying around the throne. And sometimes people have the idea that this is kind of like what a seraphim would be. Well, not at all. because we find that when they speak, one of them spoke and it tells us in verse 4, and the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called.

That was the one. One called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. So we cannot for any moment think it's like these little babies flying around.

These were awesome. They were powerful. When you think about it, just these angelic beings, you think of just an angel. An angel struck terror into the heart of man.

If we were confronted by an angel, if we were able to see an angel, and remember in the Old Testament there were, and even in the New, there were revelations given of an angel where they were able to see, where their eyes were opened spiritually to see.

[10 : 21] it was an awesome spectacle. And again, when we see what an angel could do, remember how the Lord sent an angel to destroy, was it, the Syrian army, or the Assyrian army, and over, was it, 180,000 men were killed through the night.

One angel came, wiped out. It's an extraordinary, just wiped them out. That's an angel. And yet, we see the impact of being in the presence of the Lord that these heavenly beings, that they have to shield themselves and cover themselves so that they cannot look upon the glory of God.

The glory of God is so overwhelming, so great. And you know, I would say it is something we need to recapture and understand.

Now, as a church, and I'm not talking about a church here, the church at large, we have many priorities, and rightly so. Priorities of evangelism and youth work and with all the different age groups and the spread of the gospel.

But you know, I think one thing, one priority, and where the church is losing its way, it's lost its sight of the glory and the holiness of God.

[11 : 39] Because how we view God and his glory and his holiness will have an impact upon how we live, how we conduct ourselves, how we speak, how we worship, everything.

It will change us. Nothing else will like this. It will cause us to come down off our high horses. It will cause us to bring us to think an awful lot less of ourselves.

It will cause us to worship him, to fall down before his feet with a genuine cry. This is what happened to Isaiah when he got an insight into the glory of God.

He became a totally different man. We'll see that just in a moment. And so we've got to remember that particularly as we gather together in this building or any building that we come into the presence of God.

We come to worship God. You know, there's a lot of people and they'll say, ah, church is boring. You'll find people and say, ah, church is dull. Church is boring. You know, it's a very solemn thing to actually say that.

[12 : 46] Because in a sense what people are saying is God is boring. And that's a fearful thing to say. Because when we come to church, for the hour we come, we ought to come so fired up, keyed up, aware that we're drawing into the presence of the King of Glory and Majesty.

It's not a time just to slouch and to say, ah, it doesn't matter. This is a key moment of our week where we come to face the King, to worship Him, to reverence Him, to hear what He's got to say.

And that's why we ought to be prepared in our heart, that we should seek to prepare our hearts spiritually as we come into the presence of the King.

there ought to be anticipation. You're going out, you get an invite, or somebody says, right, I'm going to take you out for a meal to hotel next week. And you say, oh, great, and when that time comes, you're looking forward to it.

And you're saying, I'm really looking forward to this. We should be looking forward every single time we come. You may say to you, ah, preaching's dull. My friend, you are coming to meet, I am coming to meet the King.

[14 : 03] we should be coming to the church and saying, Lord, speak to me today. Help me to worship. Give me an attitude of worship so that my soul is exalted in thy presence, so that I will meet with you and fellowship with you, that my life will be changed by you, so that I may be ready to live for you.

This is what should be happening. So we need, we need to be spiritually prepared and spiritually vital and vibrant. So you see, this is, this is what it is, and this is what happens with, with God's people, and I, I know there's, a change takes place, you know, when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, church, that church changes.

And it's not that the church has changed, it's not that the people have changed. You'll find that if you're here today, and you know, you know yourself where you are before the Lord, but if you're here today without the Lord as Savior, you may have an interest in your heart, and there might be times where you come out of church and you say, you know, I really enjoyed that.

But there might be other times where it just passes you by, and that might be the more frequent expression, it just kind of passes by. But you know, when the Lord begins to work in your heart, things begin to change, and there's more and more enjoyment.

And you're saying to yourself, oh, you know, I don't know, somehow, somehow it's affecting me. Well, what has happened is that the Lord, it's the Lord who's changing your heart, it's the Lord who is opening your mind, it's the Lord who's beginning to give you a spiritual appetite.

[15 : 57] And that's what happens when a person is converted, they're given a spiritual appetite. The things of God become important. However, the people of God can also lose their spiritual appetite.

And that's why I'm saying it's so important that our spiritual appetite is sharp. And often, if we fill ourselves all the time with the things of the world, it will spoil our spiritual appetite.

In the very same way, if you give little children or allow children freedom to sweets and to crisps all the time, when they come to the tea table or the dinner table, they'll have no appetite.

They'll just pick at their food, they'll take a wee bit here and a wee bit there and say, I'm not hungry. Because they've been eating junk all the time. It's not that they're not eating, but they're eating the wrong stuff.

And it's true spiritually as well. If we continue to feed ourselves just with what the world has, when we come to the table of the Lord, when we come to the gospel table, we say, ah, and you don't get, and you go out and you come into church and you go out of church the same way, unchanged, unmoved, unaffected, because the spiritual appetite is gone.

[17 : 17] As Jesus said, you've got to watch against the world. We're in the world. There's many great things in the world. We need to be spiritually vibrant and enjoy the things, but not at the expense of it deadening us.

Jesus in the parable of the sower shows that the world chokes. It strangles. That's what it does. It's got a choking effect. It's like wrapping itself around and suffocating.

And that's what it'll do. And that's why we need to be exercised spiritually, so that when we come to God's house, it affects us. The word affects us.

We're changed by it. It makes an impact upon us. And that's if we are spiritually attuned and spiritually vibrant, we'll look forward to coming and we'll be seeking to see the glory of God.

Not saying we're going to get an experience like Isaiah, but we should still be able to see something of the glory and the holiness of God.

[18 : 20] And that's what we find these seraphims as they flew, they called to one another and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

You know, it's a wonderful thing to be able in a sense to see the holiness of God. See, part of our problem is that we try and make God like ourselves.

We try and bring God down to our own level and try and make fit God into our thinking. God condemned his people for that in Psalm 50.

He said, you think that I'm just like you. And that's part of the problem. You think that I will look at things in the way that you look at them.

But no, that's getting it so wrong. How does it go? I think it's in Psalm 50. These things, in verse 21, these things you have done, this is where his people have gone all wrong.

[19 : 34] There's a list of what they've been doing. And I have been silent, the Lord is saying. I've been silent. You thought that I was one like yourselves. So you see, the problem was that Israel had taken God right down to the level of their own thinking.

And they thought, it's just like us. God says, no, I'm going to rebuke you and I'm going to lay the charge before you. It's very serious and solemn. And we can be guilty of that, of thinking that God will look at things and assess things in the same way.

And you know, this is part of the great problem with regard to people's assessment of God and the appearing when we have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Because people, this is how we think. We judge ourselves against other people. And we say, it'll be all right when I get there.

good. Because I'm looking at other people and I'm judging myself against them and I'm just as good as they are. And at a human level, that may very well be, but that's not how we're judged.

[20 : 44] We're not judged one against another. We're judged against Christ. We're judged against the perfect law. We're judged against perfection. perfection. And that's where we've had it.

That is why we need a covering. That is why we need the Saviour. That's why God sent His Son, His Saviour into the world. Because we have no righteousness.

We're bankrupt. Weighed in the balances and found wanting. People think that the balances say there you have your good deeds on the one side and bad deeds on the other side and they cannot balance.

They don't. We're on the one side. And the absolute perfect law of God is on the other, demanding from us perfect obedience and its total imbalance.

It's not 50-50 as we're saying. It's 100-0. Completely good. And the only way it can be balanced and righted is with the righteousness of Jesus.

[21 : 54] imputed to us. There is no other way. And so we've got to come and see this and understand this and realize this protection.

And so Isaiah when he sees the glory of God, when he sees the holiness of God, the distinctiveness of God, that which makes God God and separate from all others, he sees himself as nothing.

And he says, oh, woe is me, for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. And he says, woe is me, for I am lost. The idea is coming apart. I'm a man of unclean lips.

If you had asked people in Judah, who's a man who's got clean lips? They would think, oh, Isaiah, he's a prophet. He's always speaking the word of God. You want to see a man with really clean lips?

You go and speak to Isaiah. Let's hear what Isaiah says. Woe is me, for I have unclean lips, because he saw the glory of God.

[23 : 07] And that is always the effect when we see, when we see the glory of God. It's like Peter, when Peter saw Jesus and came to understand who Jesus was.

He said, depart from me, for I'm a sinful man, O Lord. When Paul came to discover who he was, it's interesting, you go through the epistles, and you will find when Paul is writing, he's going down and down.

He says, I am the least of the apostles, the least of the saints, he says elsewhere. Elsewhere, he says, I am the chief of sinners. Paul wasn't writing that for effect.

He wasn't sort of saying, I'll show people just how bad I am, what a sinner. Paul meant that with all his heart. I'm the least, I'm the least of all the apostles, and he meant it.

I'm the chief of sinners. I never knew a worse man than me in what I did to the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is the effect, effect.

[24 : 15] And that is why we need to see the holiness and the glory of God. It will humble us. And my friend, that's when God will use us. God can't use the proud person.

God uses the humble person. And that's what God is doing. He's preparing his people, A for work and B for glory. And you know, God's people are being prepared for glory.

they're being prepared by going down. When the corn is ripe, it's stooping. You don't pick it when it's upright and green.

It's when it's stooping. And these are the ones who are being made ready. Ready for service and then ready for glory. And I would say it's so important that we seek to see the glory of God.

We say to the Lord, Lord, humble me. But this is one way. Lord, help me to see your glory. Help me to understand something of your holiness, Lord. It'll change you.

[25 : 19] It'll change me. It'll change the way we worship. It'll change the way we live. It'll change the way we serve. And when Isaiah saw that, and he was undone, on the one hand, he just feels that he's of no use or value at all.

But God then commissions or sends then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongues from the altar. And he touched my mouth, saying, Behold, this has touched your lips.

Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. There's a lot we could say here. Just the one thing, you notice the order. First there is a confession of sin, and then there is a dealing with it, the forgiveness.

That's the way it works. I say, I confess to sin. Oh, woe's me. I'm coming apart. I'm lost. I'm a man of unclean lips.

And the very area that he was so conscious of being impure in, the Lord comes and heals him. And he says, Say, I have touched your lips.

[26 : 27] Your guilt is taken away. And your sin is atoned for. And Isaiah then just throws himself open to serve and to work for the Lord.

I hope that all of us in here today will have a little insight into the glory of God. Ask the Lord to show you. You'll find that Moses cried for that.

Show me your glory. What a prayer that was. It will change us for good, for effectiveness.

And God's people are most effective when they are most like himself. When they are most like the Saviour, Jesus Christ. And it is as we come to see the Lord more and more and spend time with him that we become more and more like him.

Let us pray. Oh Lord our God, we give thanks for the word, the deep experiences that thy people were given over the years.

[27 : 38] And these experiences are recorded for us because here we have the word of God. This is for us today where we're at. We pray that our lives will be changed for good.

We pray, Lord, that we might be effective witnesses as we go on day by day serving the Lord. Lord, we pray, O Lord, for a spiritual appetite, for the things of God.

Bless us then and keep us. And watch over us as we make our way home. We pray for safety for everybody. Keep us, Lord, shelter us, and take away our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.