

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

Title: The Holiness of God

Truth: God's holiness demands our repentance, provides our cleansing from sin, and calls for our service.

Date/Location: Sunday May 13, 2018 at FBC; Wednesday June 27, 2018 at GMSA; Sunday July 7, 2024

Introduction

The year is 739 B.C. The king of Judah, Uzziah, had died in this year, after a reign of 52 years. At that time God called a man named Isaiah to bring a message of judgment to a people who would refuse to listen, until the nation was devastated by that judgment. He also brought a message of hope for a future time in which the nation would be rightly related to God.

This chapter shows Isaiah's calling. Though it is recorded as chapter 6, it occurred chronologically before chapters 1-5 and the rest of Isaiah.

I. The Holy God, 6:1-4

A. The exalted nature of God, 6:1. The tall and elevated throne indicates God's grandeur. The length of the train of his robe points to the same truth. The edge or hem of his garment filled the temple. The temple refers to the heavenly temple seen in Isaiah's vision, the dwelling place of God. It does not refer to the temple in Jerusalem, for there was no throne in the Jerusalem temple. Remember, this is a vision of Isaiah, in which the Spirit of God caused him to see what God wished for him to write.

B. Angelic beings recognize God's holiness, 6:2-3.

1. These seraphim, or "burning ones," are a marvelous angelic creation with three pairs of wings. They appear by name only here in Scripture. However, the same six-winged creature, or one remarkably similar, appears in Revelation 4:8.
2. The four wings that cover the face and feet are indications of the holiness of God, in whose presence they are hovering. They covered their eyes so they could not look directly at the glory of

God. They covered their feet to indicate that the place where they were was holy (like Moses, Exodus 3:5) and that they were lowly servants of this holy God. The last set of wings was used to fly about in service of God.

3. Their words indicate the focal issue in the situation: **the holiness of God**. Crying out to one another, they expressed to each other and to all that were listening the thrice-holy nature of God.
 4. The seraphs also remind us that the entire earth displays the glory of God. This is lost in our secular, evolutionary society, because most people think creation reveals itself through science and displays the glory of science, and ultimately, the glory of mankind who does the science. Or, the thought goes, creation expresses the glory of itself, and it becomes the object of worship.
- C. Instead of the worldly view of creation which elevates creation to an exalted throne, the creation trembles at the presence of the creator of the universe (v. 4). The creation shakes when confronted openly with the glorious holiness of God. For examples, see Exodus 19:18 and Hebrews 12:27.
- D. In addition, smoke filled the temple. The *house* is how it is translated by the NKJV. The word should be translated as *temple* or *dwelling place*. This is the house of God, and whenever the glorious presence of God manifests itself in a physical location, there is this kind of smoke cloud (Rev. 15:8; Exodus 19:9, 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14). All the examples cited have to do with some significant event in the history of Israel, or, of the judgment of God in the case of Revelation 15.
- E. **The meaning of holiness.** Although words fail the most eloquent among us to express what God's holiness means, we can explain what the Scripture tells us about it. Holiness has to do with distinction or separate-ness. God is distinct from His creation, and He is completely morally pure. We are neither of those things.
1. What holiness means with respect to creation is that God is not created, and no creation can become God, or a god. This distinctiveness in terms of "kind" cannot be erased. There are

two overarching kinds of things that exist: God, and everything else. That is, God is one thing, and His creation is another thing. Or, said another way, the two kinds of things that exist are uncreated things (the Triune God), and created things (the universe)! These distinctions can never be eliminated. This is in part what makes it so arrogant to think that a man can become god—just like Satan told Eve in Genesis 3:5. It is impossible, but the very thought is blasphemous because it suggests a type of thinking that wants to replace God. That is idolatry.

2. Holiness also refers to God’s relationship to sin, or, stated positively, His moral purity. God is light (holy) and in Him is no darkness (sin) at all (1 John 1:5). That principle is the theological foundation of the book of 1 John, and the basis of the tests of eternal life that John explains throughout his letter.

F. So what are the angels doing, crying out about the holiness of God?

1. Their words **proclaim a truth**. What they say is reality. God is holy. He is not a sinner, He has no sin, and anyone who charges Him with sin simply does not understand God. Sometimes, a charge against God’s inherent perfection comes from those who have suffered a loss and blame God for sinning against them. But God cannot be tempted or fall to the temptation of evil. Neither can the creation complain when the creator metes out judgement for the sin of the creation, for God’s judgment is not itself a sin.
2. Second, their words **warn** any outsider who would attempt to intrude upon the holiness of God. This “invisible (but audible) fence” tells any sinful creature that if you so much as attempt to cross into God’s holy territory to sully his character or attack His holiness, you will be destroyed. Consider the earthly example of Exodus 19:12-13 and 16.
3. The words of the seraphs are **worship**. They express that among the angels, those closest to God recognize that He is worthy of worship because He is holy. He has a state of worth that demands we acknowledge His holiness all the time. We might not understand how a God who is perfect in humility and love can be the center of this kind of such worship attention, but we

will certainly understand better by and by. For now, we see a bit dimly, sensing by the indwelling Spirit and the Word that God, Christ, and the Spirit Himself are perfectly without sin and worthy of worship. How can they then dwell with sinful man?

4. Fourth, the words of the seraphs are **dismaying to the sinful creature**. Isaiah experienced this. We who have fallen short of God's glory cannot approach in our own merit, for all we have is demerit. It tells us that our pathetic excuses for our sin can never satisfy a holy God.

Only Jesus could dare to walk into the holy presence of God. He bought redemption for us, and so purified the matter of human sin that He could be accepted in the immediate vicinity of God. Only He could approach the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13-14) after having been touched by sinners, and having been imputed the sin of mankind, and having borne the wrath of God. All creatures who attempted to do so would find it utterly and eternally destructive to their souls.

Thankfully, there is one way to appear favorably before God's presence, and that is IN Christ. God invites and urges sinners to come to Him that way.

II. The Unclean Isaiah, 6:5

- A. Woe was a term of disaster and judgment. Isaiah pronounced woes 21 times throughout the book using that word, and many more with other words. It seems a sound general principle that no one is fit to pronounce woes on others who has not first humbly and truly pronounced a woe upon himself. (Of course, the Triune God is the exception to this since He has no sin to bring woe upon Himself.)
- B. In this self-woe, Isaiah recognizes that he is a sinner. He has come to a point of repentance. He knows that he is doomed before the God he has just seen. He knows he has unclean speech, and lives amongst people who are the same. He understands that his unclean lips are caused by an unclean heart (Matthew 12:34, 15:18; Luke 6:45). The vision of the great King of the Universe, the LORD of hosts, compels him to recognize this.

- C. This head-to-head comparison of sinful man in view of God's pure holiness is a reason why people do not want to consider God, for they would have to consider as well that they have unclean lips, and hands, and feet, and hearts, and minds. But we come face to face with this reality in the Word of God. Although the believer has not seen God or Christ with physical eyes, he has seen him, in effect, with our spiritual eyes. We sense our sinfulness and have cried out to God in repentance.

III. The Clean Isaiah, 6:6-8

- A. In Isaiah's vision, one of the seraphs took a fiery coal from the altar. Coming as it did from the altar, it was hot because it was either burning or had just completed burning a sacrifice. Therefore, this is a fitting picture of cleansing from sin because it is associated with the shedding of blood of the sacrifice. In that it was brought to Isaiah and touched his "unclean lips," the atoning effect of the sacrifice was applied to Him.

In our day, the blood of Christ—final sacrifice—is applied to the believer through repentant faith. God applies it. We receive the blessing of that application. When it is done, our iniquity is taken away, and sin purged. Refer to Psalm 32 to remind yourself what that means. Then reflect on the blessing of forgiveness!

- B. Ready to serve, v. 8. This verse is reminiscent of the Lord's call of Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-7). It expresses salvation followed immediately by a call to service. God wanted a messenger to go to the people of Israel to tell them his Word. Isaiah responded "Here am I! Send me." He was now **ready**, having had the sin problem dealt with. And, he was **willing**, seeing what God had done for him. It was a relatively small thing for him to spend his life in service to the great King.

Conclusion

John 12:41 informs us that Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord...Jesus Christ! Let us remember that our Savior is holy, sinless, worthy of worship, and worthy of our life of service.