

Isaiah Chapter 6

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Preacher: Gordon Frame

[0 : 0 0] where Isaiah writes in the year that King Isaiah died I saw the Lord seated on a throne high and exalted and the train of his robe filled the temple above him were seraphs each with six wings with two wings they covered their faces with two they covered their feet 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 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 tongues 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 then I heard the voice of the Lord saying whom shall I send and who will go for us and I said here am I send me well this evening I want us to look together at that passage that I read you a little earlier it is this great event the the defining event really in the prophet Isaiah's life when he has this great vision of God in the temple and actually remarkably if you look in John's gospel in John chapter 12 we're told that in this vision Isaiah saw Jesus's glory and spoke about him so we see something of the glory of our triune God father son and Holy Spirit and I wonder if you just noticed in that reading that it's interesting that the Lord says to Isaiah and who will go for us another little glimpse and reminder that we have a three-in-one God the triune God well just before we come to have a look at the vision itself and what Isaiah sees and its significance let me just give a little bit of background to it a little bit of context to it this takes place we know exactly because it says when the king died this happened in the year 740 BC and the state of Israel the nation of Israel was in a pretty dire state at the time every year you know that the president in

America gives a state of the nation a speech well if you were to look at the previous chapter Isaiah 5 you will see Isaiah giving his state of the nation speech and it's a pretty grim picture somebody has said that the picture of Israel there shows it in a state of spiritual apostasy and moral disintegration and if you've got your Bibles in front of you just look with me very briefly in chapter 5 at the woes in chapter 5 says some of us here will be old enough to remember Frankie Howard and his woe woe and thrice woe well Isaiah goes further than that there are six woes in chapter 5 and they paint a picture pretty horrible picture of Israel so just look at them very briefly with me in verse 8 woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left here we have rampant materialism we have people who just want as much as they can get they've got one house let's have another they've got one field let's have another they just want more and more and more a second woe in verse 11 woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine here we have people who just live for their drink they live for drunken pleasures they live for hedonism that's what their whole approach to life is the third one in verse 18 woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit and wickedness as with cartero it's a little bit more difficult to pick up what Isaiah saying there but it seems to be the idea that they're that just as a car might be driven through the city to show their wares here they are just their sin is absolutely open and flagrant they want everybody to see it they're not embarrassed about it at all they're defiant about it fourth one in verse 20 woe to those who call evil good and good evil there is total perversion of morality the inversion of right and wrong if something is right they'll say it's wrong if something wrong they'll say it's right no moral compass whatsoever in their lives and then there's arrogance verse 21 woe to those who are wise in their own eyes we know everything we don't need god to tell us what to do we know everything arrogant conceit and then amongst their rulers finally in verse 22 woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine champions at mixing drinks and these are their leaders they just love their bevy and what effect does that have on them as leaders verse 23 they acquit the guilty for a bribe but deny justice to the innocent they're open to bribes you know if you've got the money then you win your court case no fairness whatsoever unjust leaders who oppress the weak

and i don't know as i read those perhaps some of you were thinking of it and saying well yeah that doesn't seem a thousand miles away i can see some of that in our own society and it saddens us but if it saddens us to see it in our society if anything can i suggest it was even worse here because these are supposed to be the people of god this is israel this is the land that was meant to be the beacon that shone out so that the other lands around about could say wow that's what a nation is like who follow the true and the living god how can we find out about them israel was meant to be that wonderful model of what it was like to follow god and yet what does it say about them the end of verse 24 they have rejected the law of the lord almighty and spurned the word of the holy one of israel they were particularly blessed they have the prophets they have the law and yet they were spurning it they wanted nothing to do with it it was a dreadful situation so that's the context that's the background of isaiah's vision and then we are told the king died that's the time when he has this vision in the year that king isaiah died now he's an interesting king you can look back if you have time this week look back at two chronicles chapters 25 and 26 and you can read about the whole reign of king aziah he was somebody who actually started very well he got rid of some of the the altars of the false gods in israel and he began very very well but we're told it's interesting we have the phrase don't we in english pride comes before a fall well actually the first mention of that phrase is found in two chronicles chapter 26 and it is a description of uziah pride came before a fall not content to be king of israel he decided he could be a priest as well he went into the temple and he started doing things that only the priests were allowed to do and because of that arrogance he was struck down by god with a skin disease like like teleprosy but nevertheless despite his failings uziah had reigned for 52 years you know he'd been a a solid figure in israel and he had given this impression of stability in the country and now he was gone and again in in recent years in britain in western europe perhaps at times of financial collapses that we've seen or terrorist threats that we've seen for a lot of people the things in which they had put their security and put their trust in suddenly don't seem quite as certain and as sure and as secure as what they did and perhaps what people in this land need to see just as people in isaiah's day did was to see a vision of the eternal

realities to see what really counts what really is secure john mccarthur paraphrase chapter 6 verse 1 in this way in the year that we lost our human king i saw the real king in the year that king isaiah died isaiah saw this remarkable had this remarkable vision of the true king so then let's come to this vision itself and the response to it and just i hope to help us as a little memory aid to us we're going to have 4g coverage i don't know whether you get 4g coverage in whitby sometimes you struggle to get 3g but don't you with it but 4g coverage we're going to have this evening of this passage and the first one looking at verses 1-4 we're going to consider something of the glory of god the glory of god i know some of you here will remember florrie walton a lovely old lady of the lord i suppose it's because i knew her as an old lady she must have been younger once upon a time but florrie was at one time she was the one member of hebden bridge church till gradually in god's grace it grew but i remember speaking to florrie once when i was still a very young man and she said to me you know she said gordon one of the great problems that we have is that there is no sense of the majesty of god and then she said to me and i'm not talking just about the world out there she says i'm talking about in the church we've lost the sense of the majesty of god and obviously we can't say that for every individual person every individual believer but i think sometimes it is true that we lose that sense well isaiah who is made to see something of god's majesty and notice that isaiah is given it he didn't ask for it he didn't go looking for it but he saw a glimpse of the glory of god and let me just look at it in three ways according to his senses his first glimpse he he sees something of the sovereign majesty of god what does he see he sees this vision of god on a throne seated on a throne he is high and exalted and he sees these seraphs these angelic beings with their six wings above him they're ready to do whatever god asks of him it's a glorious sight that is there in front of him and surely as he sees that he is reminded that god is omnipotent that he is all powerful and that he's glorious he's resplendent he's regal do we sometimes forget that do we sometimes think that you know that the problems the difficulties in this world that the church faces are somehow you know rather too big for god to be able to handle we'd never say that of course but do you think sometimes mentally we lose sight of the fact that god is sovereign that he is omnipotent

do we lose sight of that so that's what isaiah sees but then he hears something he hears these angels these seraphs singing about god and they sing holy holy holy is the lord almighty now again many of you might know that in the hebrew language sometimes if you're wanting to reinforce something to emphasize it they would use repetition often things are put two ways in a verse one thing builds on the other but you know this is the only place or the only word that is used of god three times holy holy holy you know they want you to grab a hold of this that this is vital that this is important alec mitcher said of this that god is so holy that a super superlative had to be invented to express it holy holy holy is the lord god almighty as if words failed them to express his holiness now that word holy it's got a couple of meanings a couple of root meanings to it it speaks of somebody's brightness and righteousness it also speaks of their separateness their otherness that they're different to anything else john piper says of god's holiness his holiness is his utterly unique divine essence his utterly unique divine essence there is none like him and that's what they sing of holy holy holy is the lord almighty so he sees something of the glory of god he hears about his holiness and then he feels something something of his awesome power can you imagine he's there in the temple he says and he says as the angels sing of god he says the doorposts and the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke it was an awesome sight an awesome feeling frightening

[18:18] I would imagine to Isaiah I remember some years ago hearing Phil Arthur give this illustration about how in New York apparently one of the amongst the sort of nouveau riche the great accessory to have was a pedigree cat you know they used to spend thousands of pounds on these pedigree cats but of course when they left them alone in their Manhattan apartments to go out to earn their millions these cats were ruining the furniture you know scratching their furniture and their curtains so what they tended to do was they took them to the vets and had their clothes removed so they couldn't do any harm and Phil Arthur says you know that's the sort of god that some people want a de-clawed god who's a nice accessory but actually doesn't do anything at all well that is not the god that Isaiah sees and it's not the god who is the real god is no benevolent

Santa Claus he is an awesome character the writer of this Hebrew says it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living god have we lost sight of how great god is Isaiah wouldn't be coming away from that saying wow that was really interesting you know he was devastated by it so then let's go on to the consequences so we've seen this one g the glory of god and we're going to look at the rest of the passenger three more g's guilt grace and gratitude last summer I went on holiday Janet and I went on holiday with our daughter we followed her and she just said to me what were you reading on the way over in the plane and I have to admit that I'd been reading Kevin de Young's explanation of the Heidelberg catechism and she looked at me and she said dad that's really sad you know you're meant to be on holiday you know but honestly it's great

I do recommend it and he points out that the whole Heidelberg catechism which is a book of you know showing the great doctrines of god that it's built on the whole idea it shows man's guilt before god the grace of god to us and the gratitude that should be our response to that Kevin de Young also points out that if you look at the whole of the book of Romans it can be looked on under those three titles as well there's something for you to look up and study afterwards but we see it here in Isaiah as well the first thing guilt now sometimes psychologists look askance at Christianity and say oh terrible terrible you're always talking about people's guilt you know we need to get rid of guilt well if by that they mean get rid of guilty feelings that are undeserved and sometimes people do have that sometimes people have memories in their youth for which they blame themselves for which they were not to blame fair enough but our problem our largest problem isn't guilt feelings that we shouldn't have it's real guilt that we don't acknowledge when Isaiah sees something of the holiness of God he becomes very aware of his personal guilt compared to this God my best is like filthy rags you see he says woe to me chapter 5 is full of woes but it's woes to them out there now he says woe to me he says yes the people

I'm surrounded with are people of unclean lips but now he recognises I am a person of unclean lips and I live amongst a people of unclean lips he recognises his own personal guilt and faults and he's overwhelmed with it he says I am ruined and annihilated and you know it's a frequent response in the Bible when people see something of God to actually fall down before him realising their own unworthiness before him we see it in Ezekiel we see it at the beginning of the revelation when the apostle John has a picture of the risen Lord Jesus he falls down before him as if dead and another great example of it is Peter Peter the close friend of the Lord Jesus on earth but there was a time when the

Lord Jesus carried out one of his great miracles miracles and Peter just suddenly realised how great this person was how other he was to himself and he didn't say wow that was great can you do something like that again he fell before Jesus and he said depart from me because I'm a sinful man he saw how special Jesus was he saw something of the holiness of Jesus and his first reaction is I can't even live in the same air as you you know depart from me Lord I've just become aware of how sinful I am why did these people in a sense fear God it wasn't because they were just aware of how puny they were as human beings in the sight of the majestic God they were aware of how sinful they were in the light of God's moral purity so if you're not yet a

[24 : 50] Christian here tonight and I don't know you also I don't know what your position is here that's something we need to be aware of we're never going to go Jesus spoke of himself as being the great doctor of our souls the physician of our souls but we're never going to go to the doctor unless we're aware that we're sick we need to be aware that before a holy God we really are guilty and again as Christians we need to lose our superficiality which we sometimes have isn't it and we need to appreciate in a sense more the guilt that was ours before we can fully appreciate the grace that God has shown to us because that's what I want to go on to next the grace of God Isaiah cries out admits his guilt before God and how does God respond he responds with wonderful grace he sends one of these angels one of these seraphs with a live call there was an altar that always burned in the temple that was used for sacrifices and one of these calls is taken from that altar and touches the lips of


Isaiah it must have been pretty painful but lest Isaiah or we don't work out what that's all about he touches his mouth in verse seven and said see this has touched your lips your guilt is taken away your sin atoned for that is the message of God through that this call was on the altar where sacrifices were made for sin and a call is brought to and touches him and he says your sin is taken away your guilt is removed again two different words that are being used there the word sin refers to the outward act we don't know exactly what he said that he spoke of himself as having unclean lips but he said that outward act is forgiven that's the word sin that's atoned for but also your guilt that's a different

Hebrew word and that describes not the outward act but the inward motive that caused him to act in that way you see the thoroughness of the forgiveness the thoroughness of the atonement it's not just the outward act that you're being forgiven from it's the inward motive that caused it as well and what had Isaiah done to be acquitted what had he done to be ransomed absolutely nothing absolutely nothing it was all of the grace of God and so it is for every boy girl man old woman who becomes a Christian today I read from Ephesians right at the beginning Paul there reminds us it is by grace you have been saved through faith and even the faith is not from yourself it is the gift of God right and to the

Romans he says while we were still sinners Christ died for us and in one of the great gospel hymns top ladies hymn rock of ages which I'm sure many of you know remember those lines nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling so if you're not yet a Christian today can I call on you to call on the Lord Jesus Christ and don't say look I've done this or I'm going to come to church more regularly and I'm going to do this please forgive me for that just come with nothing in your hands admitting that you are a sinner admitting that you can't do anything to change yourself but pleading with God that he would impute take that righteousness of Jesus and his death and apply it to your life and purge you of your sin

Isaiah had that call from the altar of sacrifice touching his lips John MacArthur said the cross of Jesus is the live call that touches our lips that cleanses us go to the Lord Jesus so there is his guilt there is God's grace and then finally we see Isaiah's gratitude and we see his gratitude shown now in his willingness to serve this great God only when he is cleansed is he fit really to serve having received this undeserved grace from the Lord how else could Isaiah respond when this same Lord asks for one who will be a witness for him who will go for us but to say here am I send me and I'm sure he didn't say it boastfully look at me you know

[30 : 53] I'm the man you're looking for look how great I am no it's just out of gratitude here am I I'm willing send me I'm sure you all know the old phrase that God is more concerned about our availability than our abilities have we that sense of gratitude towards God for what he has done to us and done for us that we will say here am I whatever you want of me Lord send me so this is to be the driving force of Christian service we don't serve in order to ingratiate ourselves with God not in order to think that we can make ourselves acceptable to him or worthy of his salvation but out of a sense of gratitude for what he has done for us through the cross of Jesus then we say Lord

I want to serve you so may it be that we not visually but we get a glimpse again even tonight from his word of something of the greatness and the glory of God and out of our gratitude for the grace of this glorious God who has saved us from our guilt may we make ourselves available for God to do whatever he will with us may the Lord bless us through his word heart and  Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.