

—{1}. **Isaiah 6:1-7** . . . . . **In God's Presence**

A. The Presence of God

1. how hard it seems to set aside times of meditation to enjoy

- a. it's easy to blame the pace of modern life
- b. the pressures of work, school, family, duty
- c. this is really nothing very new
- d. in 1807 William Wordsworth wrote these words

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

- e. but David, the writer of many of the Psalms, was a fully occupied person, finding time for meditation even as he fled from King Saul (Psalms 63:6-7):

When I remember You on my bed,  
I meditate on You in the night watches,  
For You have been my help,  
And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.

- f. and as a result had a very real sense of God's presence

2. these days we seem to have lost that sense of God's presence

- a. it's often the case of us as individual Christians
- b. it's often the case of us as a body of believers, a church
- c. we could blame that lack on that pace of our life
- d. but a few lines of a poem written with wry humour by Elizabeth Barrett Browning would suggest that the real problem lies within us:

"Earth's crammed with heaven;  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only those who see take off their shoes;

The rest sit round it, and eat blackberries."

- e. we rush into a service, intent on completing some task, following up some duty, or speaking to an individual, in the midst of a clatter, of bustle, of a buzz of conversation
- f. sometimes I catch myself praying that 'God will present Himself with us this morning'
  - (A) which, taken literally, is terrible theology
  - (B) for we know that God is present everywhere; there is nowhere we can go in this life that He is not there
  - (C) but what is intended is that we, as God's people, may have a real sense of His presence in our midst

3. so, this morning we have had an emphasis on God's presence

- a. in the worship hymns and choruses which we have sung
- b. later, after this message, we will gather around the table of the Lord, which he instituted for his disciples
  - (A) at which we believe He is spiritually present
  - (B) and which looks forward to the day when He shall be present indeed, and we shall see Him as He is
- c. but the time to get to know God's presence is now
- d. for the Lord Jesus Christ promises us that presence
  - (A) 'For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.' (Matthew 18:20)
  - (B) '... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:20)
- e. so we should seek to live in God's presence in this life, lest that day when it comes should be a terrible shock
- f. like the shock Isaiah had in our Scripture reading today!

B. Isaiah Saw God – In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. . . . . 6:1

- 1. this 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah is, I believe, the record of God's calling Isaiah to the prophetic ministry
  - a. the positioning of Isaiah's prophecies, as we have before mentioned, is thematic rather than

chronological

- b. Isaiah 1-5 have presented the essence of Isaiah's message
  - c. the first chapter introduces the book as a whole
  - d. the next chapters, the messages of judgement and hope
  - e. the message having been introduced, now the messenger, with his credentials, is introduced; the message has importance and priority over the story of the messenger
2. this was a great turning point in the history of Judah & Israel
- a. between them, they covered once again the territories that had been ruled over by King David and King Solomon
  - b. Jeroboam II, had brought Israel to a prosperous peak
  - c. Uzziah, had seen Judah enriched in his 52-year reign
  - d. now both are dead or dying, and the rest is downhill
  - e. at this time, Isaiah receives his call from God
3. this record is best understood in a straightforward fashion
- a. Isaiah, either in or just outside of Solomon's temple
  - b. suddenly sees the Lord – Adonai – the sovereign ruler
  - c. sitting on his throne, the place where he carries out his twin actions of king and ruler of this people
  - d. a throne, high and lifted up; greatly exalted
  - e. with the skirts of his garments filling the temple itself
  - f. so it would seem, that God, in opening Isaiah's spiritual eyes in this event, permits him to see through the 45' high roof of the temple into the heavenly temple where God resides, and indeed to God Himself
4. Now that raises a question, because how can a man see God?
- a. Moses was told by God, '[You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!](#)' (Exodus 33:20)
  - b. the NT tells us, '[No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.](#)' (John 1:18), and,
  - c. describes God as He '[who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honour and eternal dominion! Amen.](#)' (1 Timothy 6:16)

- d. yet, on the other hand, Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' (Matthew 5:8)
- e. and the explanation comes again from Jesus who says, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, "Show us the Father"?' (John 14:9)
- f. the answer is, a man can see God as He is revealed by God in the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son; here Isaiah sees the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ

C. Isaiah Saw God's Attendants – Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. . . . . 6:2-4

1. we do not know a great deal about the heavenly beings
  - a. we do know that they are created beings, just as was man
  - b. we do know they are diverse: cherubim, seraphim, and archangels, to name just a few
  - c. we do know that there are both elect and fallen angels
  - d. and we know that the elect angels are messengers of God, worshipping and serving God as in this chapter
2. these messengers of God are awesome in themselves
  - a. John, on Patmos, had to be stopped from worshipping one
  - b. yet, before the One who is the Holy One of Israel
  - c. they cover their faces, lest they should look upon God with irreverence
  - d. they cover their feet, as a mark of humility
  - e. leaving one pair of wings for them to fly in serving God
3. but it is the cry of the angels
  - a. 'one called out to another,' is literally, 'this called unto this' and the word for 'this' has no plural
  - b. this describes is a series of continual conversations, or even an antiphonal chant, in which one cry is 'Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of hosts' to which the response comes, 'the whole earth is full of His glory.'

c. at which cry, the foundations of the temple doors – those immense stones of 12' or 15' as described in Chronicles – shook, and the temple itself kept filling with smoke – one of the symbols of the Presence of God

4. This is the glorious God whom Isaiah saw, along with God's attendant ministers praising him with pure lips and worship; and then

D. Isaiah Saw Himself – [Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.'](#) ... . . . . 6:5

1. Isaiah Sees Himself as Wretched – [Woe to me](#)

a. the Lord on the throne has not even yet spoken

b. only His heavenly attendants

c. and the true nature of His own state is impressed on Isaiah

d. the great gulf that exists between himself, a part of fallen mankind, living among sinful mankind, and those who are ever in the presence of God, and if they have to shield their faces from God, how wretched he must be!

2. Isaiah Sees Himself as Dead – [for I am ruined! undone! lost!](#)

a. he doesn't say I will be ruined, undone, lost

b. the perception of his state spiritually, means that he is as good as dead physically

c. on beholding the living God in His glory, and in common with others who had visions of God, he is but a dead man

3. Isaiah Sees Himself as a Sinner – [a man of unclean lips](#)

a. both the Lord Jesus and James, writer of the letter of that name, teach the lesson that the mouth – the lips – the things that we say, are the evidence of our true nature

b. and, unbidden, Isaiah voices that realization

c. that he is the proud possessor of a pair of lips by which he is totally unable to render praise and worship to God as is being given by God's heavenly attendants, the seraphim

d. Isaiah knows to a fuller extent how sinful he must be

4. because he has seen the real King: the LORD of hosts

a. Jeroboam II of Israel was dead about 3 years

b. Uzziah of Judah was dead or dying

c. new kings would come and go

d. but this the true King of Israel and Judah is alive, and,

e. *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Hebrews 10:31 NAS95) – however,

E. Isaiah Saw Salvation – *Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.’ . . . . . 6:6-7*

1. the coal – or hot stone – is taken from the altar

a. not that the coal, or the burning, had any virtue in itself

b. but as a symbol linking the altar, with its incense or its sacrifice, to Isaiah; applying its effect to his lips and himself

c. such sacrifice, being but a shadow of the real, effective sacrifice that would take place when the Son of God died for the sins of mankind upon the cross

2. so Isaiah, having seen God the Son

a. now has the work of God the Son applied to himself

b. particularly to the lips, the expression of his sinfulness

c. and he is able to stand fearless in God’s Presence

d. and to hear the voice of God Himself, as he speaks, saying, *‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’*

F. Conclusion

1. if we are going to enjoy the Presence of God

a. both in this life and in eternity

b. then sin must first be dealt with

- c. that is true both for the person who has not yet trusted in Jesus Christ as His Saviour, and the one who has
  - d. it required the publican, standing before the temple, not able to even lift his eyes, to say “Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner!” before he could go to his home, justified, and then able to stand in, and to enjoy, the presence of God.
  - e. and 1 John 1:6-9 teaches that for us to enjoy fellowship with Him – to walk in His presence – requires that we deal with our sin as it is committed, through confession to Jesus Christ as our great High Priest
2. In God’s Presence – it can be terror; it can be pure joy – it all depends on how we respond to the gracious offer of God in Christ Jesus for save us from our sin. How will you respond?

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PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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