

A Worship Encounter: Isaiah 6:1-8

Lately, we have been studying the topic of worship. We looked at a call to corporate worship in Psalm 95, and then we looked at what the apostle Paul said about worship in Romans 12:1-2. Worship is not just a Sunday thing but it is the lifestyle of the justified: where the believer, presents his or her bodies as living sacrifices set apart to God. So true spiritual worship, where we worship God in spirit and truth, springs forth from the soul and effects every day of our lives. It is where the people of God bow down their lives before Him.

Isaiah 6:1-8 **1** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. **2** Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **3** And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!” **4** And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. **5** So I said: “Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because 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.” **6** Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. **7** And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.” **8** Also 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.” (NKJV)

We have been seeing a common basic factor in Scripture regarding worship: God is the initiator. He reveals truth about himself and people respond. Revelation – response. But God has revealed himself to all humanity to everyone. What has man done with God’s revelation? If you turn to Romans 1:18-20 you will see what the Apostle Paul says concerning what man has done with God’s revelation. He wrote,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, are clearly seen, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

All people are given some revelation of God, but not all people respond **faithfully**. Paul describes how ungodly people respond. What do they do? They suppress the truth. They conceal it, they forget about it. They might be in a corporate worship service like this and hear the truth about God and **know** that they need to repent, but they stuff that truth deep into the recesses of their mind, because they do not love God. Yet, they might have a tragedy in their life where they lose their job or a family member dies or almost dies, and so they consider submitting themselves to God, finally bowing down all of their

life to him. When things like this take place people might even begin to go to Bible study for months, but then things change and they suppress the truth about God. They conceal the reality of what the Word says regarding their life. That is the response most of mankind gives. But the people of God, though we falter on many occasions, we respond faithfully to his revelation and do **all we can** by his grace to seek him, to be in his presence.

Now in Isaiah 6 we see an amazing worship encounter that the prophet Isaiah has with God. In this encounter **God reveals 3 specific things about Himself and Isaiah responds to each of them.**

It is important that we have some background information to grasp the totality of what took place. Isaiah was a great prophet who was probably related to someone in the palace. He was able to go and speak directly to four different Kings of Judah. This was during the middle of the 8th century BC, about 750 years before Jesus was born. During this time there were major issues in the land. Like today in America, it was a time of great crisis, and craziness. Morality was not valued at all. People were having sex outside of marriage, before marriage, and were committing adultery. It was a very wicked time. Many people who claimed to be followers of Yahweh were turning their backs on him. Uzziah was the King of Judah and he was a godly King for most of his life. God blessed him in so many ways to turn the nation around, but toward the end of his life things starting going slowly back to immorality and idolatry.

At the end of his life he looked at all God had used him to accomplish and forgot about God. He became prideful, "*I strengthened Jerusalem, I helped these people, I am the one who prospered this nation, and brought peace to the country*" he thought. Because of his pride, God gave him leprosy. When he eventually died, the people panicked, their king for 52 years who helped strengthen the country was dead. What are they to do now? True followers of Yahweh were even fearful because it was as if now that King Uzziah was dead, immorality and idolatry were going to spin out of control. Have you ever felt like that? Where it seems as if everything is falling apart all around you? That is the background to Isaiah 6:1-8. Now Isaiah had already been saved, and been called to the ministry as a prophet and here God gives him an incredible vision to motivate him to persevere.

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Wow! This is absolutely amazing. King of Judah is dead, and it looked like they were going to be overshadowed with chaos and uncertainty, everything was going to fall apart. But what happens? Isaiah saw the Lord. Lord is in lower case letters which indicates the word *Adonai* is being used here. This word speaks of the sovereignty and Kingship of God. You see, Isaiah has seen the **real** King sitting on the throne -the sovereign King, the King of kings. There was no need to panic that the human king is dead because the sovereign King is on the throne!

This is the same thing for us. It is no surprise that our country looks like it is headed toward a **major** depression. No president can fix it. Only God can fix it. We need to get

on our knees and pray for this country, for each other and for the lost; we need bow before God repent of our sins and call upon Him to heal this wicked land. And if God doesn't heal this land but lets this country reap what it has sown, guess what? **The real King is still on the throne!** Even mature Christians, we forget this at times. When you are having issues with your family, who is still on the throne? There is no trial you are going through that will surprise God. But on the contrary every trial has been ordained by God for a purpose. Our **sufferings produce endurance** (Rom. 5:3), they conform us into the image of Christ. Trials are meant to lead us to depend on God. As we depend upon God we will see spiritual growth in our lives. This is how God conforms us into his image..

When you are struggling and things in life are so hectic and you feel that you should just give up and throw in the towel, remember *Adonai* is on the throne, He is the Sovereign One. Job lost his children, home, and money. His wife told him to curse God and die. Then Job said one of the most powerful statements in all of scripture, **“though He slay me, I will trust in Him”** (Job 13:15). No matter what was taking place in Job's life, he knew God was in absolute control. God was still on the throne and that even if God were to bring more suffering, Job was not going to curse God, but trust in him! Job knew that **“the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”** (Rom. 8:18).

Turn to John 12:37: John tells us an amazing detail about Isaiah's worship encounter. Jesus just entered Jerusalem at the triumphal entry, a week before his crucifixion. He became troubled and prayed to the Father saying, **“Father glorify your name”** and a voice came from heaven saying, **“I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”** Everybody there was blown away, so Jesus spoke to them more about his crucifixion and then left. Now let us look closer at verse 37:

But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, 38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” 39 Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” 41 These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

These things Isaiah said when he spoke of who? John, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God tells us that Isaiah saw the pre-incarnate Son of God in all his glory. Praise the Lord. Isaiah saw the Lord, in full glory, fully exalted, in majesty, and power. He saw him seated on the throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Wow! And there were angelic beings above the Lord flying around him.

Look at verses 2-4: **Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.**

These seraphim are a group of angels who were designed by God simply to attend to His holiness. Many think of them as just being two seraphs, but when Daniel saw the Lord he saw them too and in Daniel 7:10 he said, “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him *the Lord*: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” What an experience! Keep in mind, these are creatures that have **never ever sinned** and yet, in the presence of God, they cover their faces and feet. Why? There is one very important reason why they cover themselves: the holiness of God. Even sinless creatures, are overwhelmed by the majesty and glory of God.

1. In this worship encounter the holiness of God is revealed. God is holy. We know it, you have heard it, we have sung it. But do we understand it? In English if we want to emphasize something we might **bold** it, underline it or scream it right? In ancient Israel they repeated it. For example, Jesus, though everything he said was true, when he was gearing up to drop some massive truth, would say, “**verily, verily**” or “**truly truly**.” He would repeat the word twice for emphasis.

These creatures are crying out “**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.**” Theologians call this the *trihagion*, and believe this 3-fold repetition is for the Trinity. Now I do not think you can truly worship God unless you hold to the historic doctrine of the Trinity. And there is plenty of evidence in Scripture for the Trinity. But I think that this 3-fold repetition is **primarily to emphasize the Holiness of God**. This is the most important attribute of God; the only one repeated three times. God is holy; there is no unrighteousness in him at all. He is completely set apart from all things. He is high and lifted up - transcendent. He is set apart from all sin and wickedness. He cannot allow sin in His presence and will not allow it to go unpunished. People don’t want to hear this. People want a God who doesn’t care how we live, an impotent God who is not going to hold us accountable for sin. But that is not the way he is.

The holiness of God is the **first thing** God reveals to Isaiah. This was a multisensory experience. Isaiah **sees** the Lord; he **hears** the loud cries from thousands of seraphim. He **felt** the foundation he was standing on shake like a major earthquake or an erupting volcano. Like at Mt. Sinai, the people **saw** and **felt** and **heard** God when he descended on Sinai. And they realized just how majestic and holy this God is. He is not a God to be messed with, **He is a consuming fire.**

How does Isaiah respond? Verse **5** So I said: “**Woe is me, for I am undone! Because 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.**”

His response to the holiness of God was **perfect**, “**Woe is me, for I am undone!**” In other words, “I am in trouble!” The word **woe** has the idea of curse. He is placing a curse on himself. God reveals his holiness, Isaiah responds by recognizing his sinfulness. He said, “**I am undone!** Or literally, ***I am reduced to silence*** as a dead man. Why? **Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.**

Now Isaiah didn’t have problem with cussing. He is probably the most righteous man in all of Israel, a prophet of God, but **now** in the presence of the holiness of God, he

curses himself because he cannot see **anything** good about him at all. I like what one theologian said, “When Isaiah saw God... for the first time in his life he saw Isaiah.” We think we are so good. Maybe compared to others we are, but not to God. You see when God reveals even a glimpse of his holiness to us; we will respond by recognizing how sinful we are, how far we fall short. The most valuable part of a prophet was his lips. The prophet declared the Word of God to people. His lips were sacred in that way. Yet, now in the presence of Holy God, he confesses that the most sacred part of his body is polluted, filthy!

People, when we see God or even when we begin to know him more from spending time with him in His Word, we will begin to see ourselves for who we really are, people of **unclean lips in the midst of a people of unclean lips**. Maybe this is why many do not want to read His Word and go to a church that teaches the Word? They know they will be faced with this truth – that the lips of all men are impure and polluted. Nobody can stand in the presence of God without becoming terribly aware of his own wretchedness. Isaiah would **never** be the same. Neither would anybody else.

2. In this worship encounter God also reveals His mercy. Look at vs 6.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.* **7**And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

Isaiah is wrecked right here. He is broken because he has seen **himself** in the light of the Sovereign Holy King of the Universe. What does God do? God sends a seraph to touch Isaiah’s lips with a burning coal. Can you imagine the pain in that? What would a burning coal do to your sensitive lips? It would sear the flesh. That is a picture of our salvation right there people. You cannot get saved until you see that God is holy and you are a sinner. When God reveals that to you, and you are broken/contrite. God on his own initiative, with His purpose, on account of his own good pleasure acts in **mercy** toward the sinner! He brings true redemption to your life to sear the flesh. And isn’t it painful? There is pain involved in true redemption.

God extends His mercy to Isaiah and Isaiah humbly receives it. Praise God! God does not leave his people in their sins. He acts in mercy toward Isaiah. He acts in mercy to us! Many people who sit in churches every week hear about the wonderful mercy of God toward sinners but they do not receive it. Pray for those in our church, who have not received the mercy of God; pray that God will change their hearts to receive it. Isaiah was forgiven of his sin. God alone cleanses our polluted hearts. To all who receive His mercy, he gives the right to be children of God (John 1:12). God has revealed his holiness, Isaiah responded with *woe*, God revealed his mercy, Isaiah responded by humbly accepting it.

3. In this worship encounter God also reveals His will.

Verse 8, **Also 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.”

God reveals His will, and what does Isaiah do? He responds by **doing it**. There is work to be done and God has a plan for Isaiah, just like he does for you. Yes, we are wretched, sinners, unworthy to do anything for the Sovereign King of the universe. But, Christians, we have been forgiven, we have been cleansed and not by a burning coal, but by the blood of the Lamb! This is so awesome. One Person of Trinity speaking to another, “**Who will go for Us?**” Isaiah, who has been cleansed, who has seen the incredible mercies of God, as Paul spoke about, Isaiah speaks up, “**Here am I! Send me.**” He offers himself as a living sacrifice. He faithfully responds to God’s gracious revelation. He is ready to serve. He is ready to do the work of God! He has been cleansed by God’s grace which illustrates the fact that the only way a person is **fit** to serve God is when he is cleansed by the grace of God. Have you been cleansed? You can be cleansed if you respond. My friends, **Send me** is the normal response of a worshiper.

Our response to God’s revelation is of utmost importance. James said, be a doer of the Word, right? Every time Isaiah responded appropriately to the revelation of God, what did God do? He revealed more. He works in this way to us as well. If you are struggling to understand God’s will for your life, if there are issues that seem overwhelming for you in life than I have some questions for you: have you responded appropriately to God’s revelation to you so far? Have you repented of your sins? Have you given up all of your old ways? When we respond appropriately to God’s revelation, He will reveal more. It’s kind of like, when you are faithful in the little things, than what? He gives us bigger things. Don’t you want that? Don’t you want clarity? Peace? You can only get that by responding appropriately. All this takes us, points to the cross of Christ. The cross is the live coal that touches our lips, purges us, and breaks us. It is the cross of Christ that makes us pure. Let’s bow our hearts before our gracious God in prayer.

Pastor Mike Sarkissian

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