

Isaiah's Vision of the Lord

By Paris Reidhead*

For our meditation from the Word this evening will you turn to Isaiah, Chapter 6... I am going to speak to you tonight from a familiar portion. Last Sunday night we saw the vision of Job, and Job saw the Lord. Tonight it in the same theme, as we have felt led to do. And I want you to see again this familiar portion. There are some portions that are familiar to us. We have them before us continually, and this is one:

“In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, Holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isa. 6:1-4).

This is the first portion of this chapter, which we will call verses 1 to 4, The Vision of Isaiah. He saw the Lord in the year that King Uzziah died. Now the significance of this is that, according to the best records, there are about five years time between chapter 5 and chapter 6. And it was due to the fact that Uzziah had sinned against the Lord. Excuse me, Uzziah had sinned, and Isaiah had sinned. Sin is contagious, you know. The sin of Uzziah was that he presumed to do that which had been forbidden to him. He was of the tribe of Judah, rightly and properly king, and God had said only the Levites could go into the holy place. He felt the Levites were unworthy, and so he took it upon himself to go in. When he came out, he was covered with leprosy, and spent five years from that time in a leper house, a place for lepers, waiting for his death. And I am sure Isaiah cried to the Lord to heal him. And apparently he became very dejected, disappointed, actually disillusioned, because he believed that this good king was to be the human instrument in effecting the reform and the revival that he was asking for. And he murmured against the Lord. I believe that we are clear in saying this, because he spoke of his unclean lips, that there was undoubtedly sin in that he had failed to recognize that God was right, and just in what He had done. And therefore there was complaint, there was murmuring, and thus there was a silence in Heaven. And God did not use this vessel whom He loved and had chosen during the period of his backsliding.

Now let us understand that this can happen to anyone. There is no question about it. We all live in mortal frames. We become weary. We have headaches. We have colds. Our spirits become dejected. Things look black sometimes because the barometric pressure is low. Have you noticed that?

Years ago in Indiana, (I don't know why, I guess you are so near sea level here. But out in Indiana my wife and I concluded that if there was a certain atmosphere in the meeting it was somehow related to the barometer, that when the pressure was heavy, and people were just logy there was no response, but when it was a bright, cheerful day, it was different. We are very sensitive people, and Isaiah was sensitive to the fact that this one upon whom he had leaned and counted had been smitten by the Lord, and of course he would blame Uzziah; but at the same time there was some disappointment in the Lord. And so five silent years. Let us face it that we are going to have that same silence. This is one of the consequences of sin. The five that I gave you a few days ago included, God does not use the dirty vessel. God did not use Isaiah during these five years. And, consequently, he is a prophet without a prophecy; he is a messenger without a message; and he waits. But in the year that king Uzziah died something happened.

When he realized that God had moved in justice, and could not be prevailed upon to change, that Uzziah had sinned, and God was right and just in keeping His Word, that it was presumption on the part of the king to do what he did, and God had no alternative, that the foundation of righteousness is more important than the blessing of an individual. So, with this even over, the king buried, he said, as he went into the temple that day, standing in front of the great door to the Holy Place, that instead of seeing the doors open, and the temple open, he saw the Heavens open, he was in the third Heaven. He saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne. This has nothing to do with the temple. There is no throne in the holiest of all. There was the mercy seat, the cherubim between the wings of which the glory presence of God did dwell; but there is no throne. This is nothing related to the temple. It is as though the sky had parted, and he had been privileged to see what the angels saw, The Lord. And I am so glad that it is this word that is used. The Lord. Here it is the Jehovah, the Old Testament again, our wonderful Lord Jesus, in His

preincarnate glory, sitting upon a throne. Here He is, the One who had reigned from eternity past, and now Isaiah sees Him, reigning in his time. He saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.

How do you visualize the Lord? How do you visualize God in His Omnipresence? How do you visualize the 3rd Heaven where the angels are? When you go to prayer, what are you thinking? Is God just three letters, printed in black ink on paper? Do you try to visualize Him? We are told by some that they need a crucifix in order that they can have visual contact with Deity. Is this true of you? How do you visualize the Lord? Is He just a word? Is He just an idea? Is He a person? When you pray, to whom are you praying? Are you praying to a word? Are you praying to an idea? To whom are you praying? Well, Isaiah had forgotten that God is God. And consequently, God in His sweet grace wanted to say something to me, and to you, so He said it to Isaiah, had Isaiah preserve it for us, and tonight we can have some insight into what is there in the 3rd Heavens.

First is the throne, on the right hand of which now is the seat of the Lord Jesus in His incarnate glory. For He has a body like unto ours, the life of which is no longer in the blood, but in the Spirit; in His hands are nail scars; in His side is a sword wound; in His feet are the ragged tears that the spikes made. There is a Man in the glory, One who could speak to Thomas, saying, Put forth thy finger and put it in My hand. Stretch forth Thy hand and put it in My side. And all of the attributes of the eternal God are manifest in a Man, a man who lived and walked, that ate fish after His resurrection, and left footprints in the sand. There is a Man in the glory, dead friend, and this Man is on a throne, high and lifted up. It was the throne He had from eternity past, but there is a difference now. Never before had the attributes of Deity been shared by humanity. But now a Man with a body like unto our bodies, save that the life is in the Spirit, a resurrection body, a glorified body, is upon the throne, having all authority in Heaven and earth in His hands.

Now I think this helps. I think it helps you to realize that there is a man in the glory. I think it helps you to realize that this man knows you, that He is touched with the feelings of your infirmity, that He has known what it was to be hungry, that He has known what it was to be weary, He has known what it was to be lonely, for He was forsaken of His friends and left to spend a cold night on the hillside of the Mount of Olives for they went to their homes, and no one invited Him to go with them: He knows what it is to be tempted, knows what it is to be tested, to be under the millstone of great conflict. There is a man in the glory. This man is the one whom Isaiah saw, but he did not see Him as we see Him. Only by faith's eye could he see Him in the Cross. In the 53rd chapter he saw something of what would be involved in this One becoming the gracious One.

Have you seen the fact that there is a man there today? Have you recognized that angels worship Him? Above it stood the seraphim, each one six wings, with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. Have you realized that in the presence of the Son of God, even the sinless angels bow, lost in worship, lost in wonder, lost in awe, overwhelmed by the glory of a man that has had all the attributes of eternal Deity invested in Him. For this is true today.

John, the beloved Apostle, saw this man, and fell on his face as dead, and here he is again, here he is before the time that John saw him, and the angels then as now are worshipping Him. Do you worship Him? Do you adore Him? You see this is the difference between the Christian and the Muslim. This is the difference between the Christian and the Unitarian. We worship Jesus Christ as God. That is what makes us Christian. Jesus Christ as God, God come in the flesh very God of very God, very man of very man. Angels worship Him. Do you worship Him? Do you adore Him? Do you love Him? Angels cover their faces, angels cover their feet, and angels stand by in willing service. Have you seen Him? as He is seen by Isaiah?

And then we notice that the thing that characterized this whole scene was holiness. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Have you recognized that this is still true, that this is a Holy Bible that tells us about a Holy God, a Holy Father, that had a Holy Son, that has been raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit, and now He is seeking to gather to Himself a holy people. Be ye holy, for I am holy. Holiness becometh thine house. That which is the atmosphere of Heaven is holiness.

What is holiness? First we must recognize that it is an admiration of, a worship of God for His attributes. All holiness begins with God. All holiness begins with the fact that there is a Person who is holy. All holiness in your life begins with the fact that some time you have seen that person that is holy. Do you see Him now? Have you recognized that everything that is not holy is exposed by His presence? Peter was too paly with our Lord, and I find in my heart a tendency to become too paly with the Lord Jesus. Do you? Do you find a tendency to do that? Peter you know thought He was just a good boating companion, and when the Lord put out from the shore, and had them cast the net on the side when they had taken nothing, and the net brake with

the fishes that were in it, then Peter cried out, Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Just the very light of His countenance was enough to make Peter to realize that he was altogether other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And the whole atmosphere of Heaven is holiness. And thus we discover that, if we rightly see what Isaiah saw, then it is holiness that we behold, holiness incarnate, holiness overspreading the whole face, holiness that is exuded by every ministry and action of God. He is a holy God.

Then the posts of the door, every inanimate thing, all of that it was there had to respond to the voice of Him that cried. And then there had to be the recognition that all of creation was tuned to this one thing of singing praise to God. Now it was this, that the very posts of the door moved, that the angels covered their faces, that the whole atmosphere of Heaven was holiness that caused Isaiah to see what a terrible thing it was that Uzziah had done. Now God is giving him a revelation of the fact that this building there made of marble and the cedar of Lebanon, this temple that is so active, was not there just for the people, but it was there to say something to the people about God. And when Uzziah broke the rule, and went in, he spoiled all that God was trying to say. And therefore there was no alternative but that God should protect the message that He was giving, just as it was necessary for Him to refuse to allow His faithful servant Moses to go into the Land because he broke the picture, so it was that He had to deal with Uzziah as He did. And thus Isaiah saw that everything that God does is but the outflow of His holiness, it is but the overflow of His character, it is but the expression of His nature, and that God can do nothing less than is Godlike. Everything God does He does in the totality of His being. Some of my friends who believe so implicitly in the sovereignty of God, and woe to you my dear friend if you do not, but some of them seem to feel that He has acted in His sovereignty apart from His wisdom, and apart from His grace, and apart from His justice, and apart from His righteousness.

Here it is, everything that God does He does in the totality of all that He is. He cannot act in one attribute. God cannot say from 9 to 11 in the morning, I'll be holy; from 11 till one, I'll be righteous; from 1 until 3, I'll be just; and from 3 until 5, I'll be gracious; and act in independent aspects of His character. It is utterly impossible. He can only act in the totality of what He is. And it is this that you must understand and all of the dealings of God with you and with anyone else. He acts consistent with Himself, and everything that He does is an expression of everything that He is. He cannot act in less than He is. And it is this revelation that here was a man that had absolutely no right to allow the sin of bitterness, the sin of murmuring, the sin of broken fellowship to come into his life, because everything that God does He does perfectly in the fulfillment of His own being. And when He struck Uzziah with leprosy, there was nothing else that He could do consistent with what He is. And therefore in the vision of God came the verdict of Isaiah. He saw Himself and pronounced the verdict. Up until this time he felt justified. He felt right in what he said. He felt he was fair in his inditement of God, that when He condemned God for being too strict, when he condemned God for being too picayunish about the little things, when he said that God ought not to have stretched such a point with such a faithful servant, he obviously felt that he was justified.

But now he sees God, and in the light of seeing God, he realizes that if God had done anything else with Uzziah that He did it would have been a blot on the Divine character, a blemish to His nature. And therefore he recognizes that God is always God, gloriously God, totally and perfectly God, never less than God in anything He does. And so now comes the verdict. It is in the light of what he has seen of God.

Now every sin that you and I are going to commit, we are going to commit out of self-pity, we are going to commit feeling that we are justified, we are going to commit feeling that we are right about it, we are going to commit it feeling that the others are wrong. There is no question if they had what we have they would see what we see, and if they were in our situation they would do what we do. This is exactly the irrationality of sin that it is at the time perfectly rational. The man who murders is doing a wise, proper act in the light of the heat and passion of the moment. He may be utterly wrong in the light of eternity and verity and truth, and right. But because he is a rational creature what he does seems right. And all sin seems right at the time to the person doing it, even wrong has the character of right. And it was that Isaiah had felt that he was perfectly justified until He saw God. But it is in the light of what God is that our conduct acquires its true character. It was when the law came said Paul that sin revived for I saw that what I tolerated was sinful and I judged it to be what God said it is. And it was in the light of the vision of God that he cried out, Woe is me. I am undone. Here is the verdict of Isaiah. He has pronounced it. The evidence is submitted. What evidence is it? It is the evidence of what God is. And in the light of what God is, he sees what he is. And he takes sides with God against himself. And, my friend, any conviction that stems from any other source than the

revelation of the nature of God is spurious, it is of self-interest, and it is of no enduring quality at all. For conviction to have validity and be meaningful, it has to stem from a revelation of the character of God.

And thus it is that it is our responsibility to every generation of sinners to reveal what God is. And we do this by the law, we do this by the Word, we do this by our own conduct and attitude. And the way you speak is teaching your children what you think of God. The way you take care of your business is teaching your family what you think of God. The way that you take care of the little details of your life is the constant sermon, what you think of God. And God is to be revealed by His people. He is to be revealed by His Word. The very purpose for establish in Israel as a nation was to have an object lesson to the sinful nations around them that would speak of God, and so it is that it is always in the light of what you have learned of God that we properly view and learn of ourselves. Woe is me, I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. He did not feel sorry for himself. He did not say, Isn't it a pity that I should have failed the Lord so and said something that was not right. He has seen God, and now he sees himself. All true conviction becomes self-revelation. There can be a pious counterfeit that sees a deed but does not see the person. But Heaven's revelation always reveals the heart. It always reveals the soul. God be merciful to me a sinner. He did not say, O God, forgive me because I have sinned. There is a difference, you know. The one is, I was trying so hard and I stumbled. And the other says, I am a rebel and a traitor. I am a sinner. Not I have sinned. He did not say, O God, pardon me. I got carried away for the moment and I said something that I really did not mean, and I know it is sin. But do not take it too seriously. This is not what Isaiah said. He said, Woe is me. I am undone. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. I am a man of unclean lips. Why? Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

And dear if we can come to the place where we see Him, this is all we should ask. This is all we should want, that we should see Him. Because when we see Him, we see ourselves aright. Oh, you can say, What a depressing theme. No. No, not a depressing theme. The verdict has to be pronounced, the cross has to do its work. The sword must pierce and pin us to the bar of God's eternal justice as utterly wicked, but when it has done that is that all? Is it just a vision leading to a verdict? No, because there is the victory.

Now, if you will, please turn to verses - beginning with verse 6: "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar" (Isa. 6:6). Here is the victory. What is the victory? The altar was the place of sacrifice; the altar was the place where fire was. This is always associated with an altar, where wrath is, where judgment is, where justice is, where righteousness is. But it is also the place of sacrifice. And so there was the morning and the evening sacrifice where the lamb would be slain, and the blood would be carried in, and there on the burning coals, the unquenchable justice of God's eternal character and the foundation of His eternal government met the Blood of sacrifice. And hisses the heat of the flames that swallowed and consumed the blood, would rise into the ears of the priests and say that now mercy has met justice. And this is the place of victory, when you are prepared to see yourself.

I speak of Isaiah; I speak not now of rebels, I speak of Isaiah. Here is a man who believed God, a man called of God, a man who loved God, but a man that had fallen into that which had kept him from being useful to God, and he could not become useful until he had seen the Lord in the light of which he saw himself. And that it was right back to the place he had come. We must always go back to the place of our first works. It is always back to the place of cleansing, and if it is matter of sin of any sort or kind revealed by the nature of God, then we come to the place of victory. Where is the place of victory? The cross, where the Lord Jesus died, the Just for the unjust, where God's wrath and His mercy married, never to be divorced throughout the endless ages of eternity. Justice and grace are wed together in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the victory is in the fact that at the right hand of the Father, the One seated on the throne, there are nail prints and there are names written on His hands. And so when Isaiah had come to the place where in the light of what he saw what he was, and he broke, realizing that sin was but the expression of what he was, and that he was in himself hopeless and helpless. Then victory. This of course is where victory always comes. It comes at the place of brokenness. If you harbor for so much as a moment the thought that you in the energy that you possess, in the strength that you have as a natural human being, can live acceptable tomorrow for the glory of Jesus Christ in the pressure of your circumstances, and in the tests of the hour of your life, then I predict for you failure, it's going to happen before noon, and be repeated before supper, and send you with grief to your bed tomorrow night. But if you have come to the place with Isaiah where you have said, I am undone and have seen the cross, and have seen cleansing, then you will realize that if God could deal with what we have done, He could deal with what we are, he could give us victory over our conduct, he could give us victory over our character, and we find that there is not only here at the place where the blood and

the fire meet, deliverance from past sins, but deliverance from the tyranny of sin and the release of His life. And it is at that place of the cross in our union with Christ that we are both cleansed and pardoned as well as given the access to Divine Life. And so it is here that victory comes. The victory is in the Person of the Son of God. He is the One who by His merit atoned for our sin. He is the One who has cleansed. But He is also the One who will come into us in every test and moment, as well as a permanent indweller, and will make manifest His life. So there is victory. Isaiah saw a vision. He pronounced a verdict, but he saw the place of victory. Then came the vocation, the call. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Isa. 6:8). And it is, I am sure, that tomorrow God would send someone to the people that you meet every day at the elevator as you leave your apartment building. You have never spoken to them, but tomorrow, if you were to just simply have His call, Whom shall I send to these people that live next door, that are in sin's darkness as isolated from the Gospel as if they were an inner tribe in Africa; and you, if you have seen a vision, if you have pronounced the verdict of your own why don't you speak today? You are timid. I know. And you left home disconsolate, and discouraged, and there was murmur in your heart. Perhaps. All right now, if you are just going to recognize now that the Lord Jesus is your life tomorrow, it is not going to be for you to stand on one foot or the other and try to think of something to say to the person at the elevator; you are just going to release an indwelling One to show friendliness and consideration, and perhaps just something about you (you may not even speak) but the Presence of the Lord Jesus will be a silent testimony.

You see, everything is important to the Christian. But Isaiah could have had 5 years known as a prophet and had no ministry until he had seen the Lord, and seen himself, and seen cleansing in the cross, and then had seen the field in the eyes of the One who had called him. The vision is of God, the verdict against ourselves, the victory at the cross, and the calling, the vocation, is that you should simply give to Him what He has asked for: your body, your personality, and allow it to be a vehicle for Him. Thus the Scripture said, "Labor to enter into rest" (Heb. 4:11). I do not think it was hard for Isaiah to say, And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah... I think there was inner life now that turned it into joy. And it is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God making real the presence of Christ that turns your life into joy. But, have you seen the Lord? and have you seen yourself? and have you seen the place of victory? and have you seen the field?

Let's pray. Our Father, we are in Thy presence, and sense Thy presence. We thank Thee for Thy presence. We need now to have the eyes of our hearts opened to behold Thee as Thou art. Give us, Lord, in these moments that we wait the vision that we need. Help us to see Him high and lifted up. Help us to see that the Lord Jesus, the pictures on the Sunday School papers, is not our Lord new; That His hair is white as wool, His eyes as a flaming fire, His face shining as the sun, His feet as burning brass, and out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword. O God, Father of our Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see Him as He is, to realize that angels still bow in His presence and cover their faces, that saints can draw near and sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5:12). "Unto Him who loved us and washed us in His blood" (Rev. 1:5). Grant, Father, that there should come to us awe, and wonder, and worship, and in the light of what He is, help us to see ourselves. And should there be in our hearts tonight that which grieves Thee, Thou whose name is holy, may this be the night the verdict is pronounced, and we take sides with Thee against ourselves, I am a man, and whatever it is, I am a woman, and realize in us there is no good thing. And then, lest we should despair, quickly see the altar, the fire, the sacrifice, the poured out life of Thy Son to wash away our sin, and that He might become our Lord. Then to hear the call that by His indwelling presence and the resurrection power we are to be vehicles for the outworking of His plan. Father, if what we have said tonight could happen, and the people that are here, half as many as were in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, there could be set in New York, such a release of Thy Life, that even this city would take note that the living Christ is in the midst. We are so prone, Lord, to hear and agree and say, Yes, yes, and never to see for ourselves, never to pronounce a verdict against ourselves, never to know victory in ourselves. O God, do not allow that to be true tonight. And may we become not spectators, but participants, asking our own heart if what we have heard is true in our experience. We know it is true in the Book. Is it true in our hearts? Have we seen the Lord? Have we seen ourselves? Have we seen the Cross? Have we seen the field? Help us, Father.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Wednesday Evening, September 19, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.