

Live in the Reality of Judgement and Glory

Isaiah 6

Sunday, June 25th, 2023

Scripture:

Isaiah 6

[1] In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. [2] Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called to another and said:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

[4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. [5] And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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 burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

[8] And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” [9] And he said, “Go, and say to this people:

*“Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’*

*[10] Make the heart of this people dull,
and their ears heavy,
and blind their eyes;*

*lest they see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”*

*[11] Then I said, “How long, O Lord?”
And he said:*

*“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is a desolate waste,*

*[12] and the LORD removes people far away,
and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.*

[13] And though a tenth remain in it,

*it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak,
whose stump remains
when it is felled.”
The holy seed is its stump.*

Let's Pray

Introduction:

So today we will be looking at one of the most important books of the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah. It is so important that in terms of theology it is often referred to as the '**Romans**' of the Old Testament.

Because in this 66 chapter book, the threads of God's big picture purposes for his people and for the world come together and are most clearly seen. And in our time together this morning, we are going to unpack some of those threads, and hopefully see their significance for the people of Israel, for us, and for the whole world.

But before we get there, we need to understand a little bit about this book and its background.

First this book was written by the prophet Isaiah, which is why the book bears his name. And though many scholars believe that there may have been a final editor and compiler of the book, the predominant thought in conservative circles is that Isaiah himself was and is the primary author.

Even though historical references in the book are few we can gather that this book was written and put together sometime in the 7th century B.C. In fact, Isaiah records the death of Sennacherib the king of Assyria which happened in 681 B.C. so the book was put together, at least in its final form, after that.

Now, one of the first things we learn about this book and about Isaiah happens right way in Isaiah 1:1 when it says:

[1] The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

This book is a vision of Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Which means that this book is a prophetic book and in fact, it is the first one in scripture. And since it is coming from Isaiah it means that he is a prophet.

And if you are wondering what a prophet is it can be defined this way. Bear in mind that this definition applies to Old Testament prophets and not necessarily to the gift of prophecy talked about in the New Testament.

“A prophet is someone who proclaimed a message or vision given to them by God. They spoke in God’s name, by his authority, and were sent to teach his people while also revealing future events to come.”

So Isaiah is God’s mouth piece, speaking with God’s authority to both teach God’s people while also revealing the realities of the future to them.

As far as the setting of this prophetic vision we also know that Isaiah had this vision and prophesied during the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah who were all kings of Judah.

Now, I’m not going to spend a ton of time giving you a super in-depth understanding of what was happening in the life of Judah during this time. For that I would encourage you to go and read 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 25-32. However, I will say the following:

Isaiah began prophesying at the end of Uzziah’s life when the Assyrians were beginning to gain control of the surrounding nations including Babylon. And within 5-10 years of Uzziah’s death they quickly became the main threat to both Israel and Judah. And this is a threat which would last throughout the 8th Century B.C.

At home, in Judah, it becomes clear from both Isaiah’s vision and from 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles that although Judah is not as bad as the northern Kingdom of Israel, they are still walking away from God. They are given to worshipping other gods and in times of turmoil they are trusting in other nations to save them instead of trusting in Yahweh, the one true God.

This is ultimately why God sent Isaiah to them. And as he proclaimed God’s vision to his people, he brought to them the following realities:

Chapters 1-39

Setting: is the Assyrian threat of the 8th Century B.C.

Audience: God’s rebellious people desiring worldly security.

Reality: Judgement is coming

Message: If they return to God and trust in him alone, they will be saved.

Chapters 40-55

Setting: Future prophecy about the 6th century B.C.

Audience: God’s defeated people who are in exile.

Reality: God will fulfill his promises.

Message: Don’t worry, your sin will be pardoned and God’s glory will be revealed.

Chapters 56-66

Setting: Future prophecy about the coming of the end.

Audience: All who hold fast to Christ.

Reality: Glory is coming.

Message: Endure to the end.

And if we put all of this together, we can see this overarching message emerge that we need just as much as the people of Judah needed.

It's the reality that we need to live as if judgment is coming, but because of Christ, so is forever glory.

So this morning we are going to unpack this message as we look at the following 4 realities that are woven all throughout Isaiah 6 and the book as a whole.

- 1. That God is the Holy Creator and King of the universe (Isa. 6:1-4).**
- 2. That judgement is real and it is coming (Isa. 6:9-12).**
- 3. That grace and forgiveness are available through Christ (Isa. 6:5-7, 13).**
- 4. That God's glorious kingdom is coming (Isa. 2:2-4).**

And my hope this morning is that we will walk away from this message and book with a renewed sense of the grandeur and glory of our great God and King. That judgement is just as real in our day as it was in the days of Judah. That we will have a renewed sense of our need for Christ as our only hope. And that we will be a people who live in the reality that this world isn't our home, that Christ is coming, and with him, eternal glory.

But let's begin where Isaiah 6 begins. With the reality...

1. That God is the Holy Creator and King of the universe (Isa. 6:1-4).

[1] In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. [2] Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called to another and said:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

[4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

If you are unfamiliar with this part of Isaiah, chapter 6 is the place where God reveals himself to Isaiah and then commissions him as a prophet to go out to this people to speak his vision and message to them.

But instead of going directly to his commission and call, God has Isaiah start out by recalling his vision and experience of God. The first thing he tells us is that the LORD, God himself was sitting on the throne, high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple.

This not only presses into the hearer, reader, and to Isaiah himself the bigness and greatness of God, but it also reminds us that God sits on an exalted throne as the king of the universe.

He rules over all things including all the kingly rulers of earth. This includes the kings of Israel, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Judah in that day. And there is not a single king or kingdom in all the world and in all times that he does not rule over as the great king. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

But the vision of God doesn't stop there. We are also told that the Seraphim are there. And that they are not only covering their feet, but they are also covering their eyes as they proclaim in repeated fashion:

***“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of his glory!”***

The repetition of word “holy” along with the covered eyes and feet of the Seraphim points us to the truth that God is not only morally pure and perfect, but also so otherly and beyond his creatures that we are unable to look upon him in his perfections.

And yet, despite the fact that God is otherly and beyond us, his glory, his majesty, his brilliance, and his presence fills the earth. He is a God who is present within his creation and in his goodness, chooses to reveal himself to his creatures and people.

This is Isaiah's way communicating to us his grand experience of God, and with it, build for God's people a grand vision of who God is in all of his glory. In fact, this is something that he does all throughout this book. Look with me at the following verses:

Isaiah 12:6

***[6] Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”***

Here we see the greatness and total set apartness of God.

Isaiah 40:25

***[25] To whom then will you compare me,
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.***

God is so holy and otherly that there is nothing in creation that is greater or can compare to him.

Isaiah 45:7, 9, 12

***[7] I form light and create darkness;
I make well-being and create calamity;
I am the LORD, who does all these things.***

*[9] “Woe to him who strives with him who formed him,
a pot among earthen pots!
Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’
or ‘Your work has no handles’?”*

*[12] I made the earth
and created man on it;
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host.*

God forms and creates everything in all creation including us.

Isaiah 48:11

*[11] For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,
for how should my name be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.*

God does all things for himself and his own purposes and glory.

This grand vision of God is something that the people of Judah needed. They had forgotten the reality of who their God was as their holy Creator and King. And instead they were trusting in lesser false gods to satisfy them and in created beings to save them.

In the same way we need our grand vision of God renewed. We are so prone to trust in earthly treasures, institutions, and conceptions of the good life that we forget about the reality that we have a Holy God who created us and continually sustains us for his own glory and purposes.

He is the only one who is worthy of our trust and worship, and nothing in all creation is greater or can compare with who he is. And right now, he is seated on this throne, high and lifted up, calling to us as his people to fear him, stand in awe of him, and give him the honor and reverence that is due to his name.

And only when we rightly understand the reality of his holiness and greatness as our king and creator, will be able to understand the judgement and glory to come and the forgiveness that he holds out to us as his people.

Which brings us to our 2nd reality.

2. That judgement is real, and it is coming (Isa. 6:9-12).

[9] And he said, “Go, and say to this people:

**“Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”**

[10] Make the heart of this people dull,

and their ears heavy,
and blind their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”

[11] Then I said, “How long, O Lord?”

And he said:

“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is a desolate waste,
[12] and the LORD removes people far away,
and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

As I said at the beginning, it was becoming clear in Judah that the people of God were walking away from him. They were given to worshipping other gods. And in times of turmoil, they were trusting in other nations to save them instead of trusting in Yahweh, the one true God.

We can see this in the events of 2 Kings 16. Ahaz came to power and unfortunately decided to walk in the evil ways of the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. He was so wicked that it says in 2 Kings 16:3:

2 Kings 16:3

[3] ...He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

And when trouble came from Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel, Ahaz didn't trust in God, but instead gave his allegiance and worship to the king of Assyria. As it says in 2 Kings 16:7:

2 Kings 16:7

[7] So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.”

And though Uzziah and Jotham were not necessarily as terrible as Ahaz, they still committed similar sins against God by allowing the high places and idol worship to remain.

And even though Hezekiah tore down the high places and it says he trusted in God, when the king of Assyria came against him, instead of looking to God to take care of him and the people of Judah, he bargained with the king and tried to pay him off.

All of this points to the truth that God's kings and his people were not walking according to his commands.

Because of this, God commissions Isaiah and tells him to go to his people. And in his going he is to speak to the people and proclaim two kinds of judgement upon them.

The first one is in verses 9-10 where God is telling the people of Judah, through Isaiah, that they will no longer see and understand the things of God. He will make their hearts dull and their eyes blind.

This is God literally using Isaiah to proclaim that he will harden the hearts of his people so they cannot follow him. And he is doing this because his people have chosen to forsake him and trust in other things.

Then the second judgement, which flows from the first, comes in verses 11-12. God tells his people that because of their continual and habitual sin and hardness of heart, he is going to lay Judah to waste and is going to remove them from their land.

So because of their sin, God is hardening his people, and is sending them into exile.

Now, as much as this message is a specific one for the people of Judah, there is still an application for us today.

As we look at the landscape of churches and Christians around us, we can observe a few things that though they seem common place today should grieve our hearts.

We see churches and Christians that have decided to capitulate to culture instead of standing upon the truth of God's word. In order to remain relevant, they have decided that they are willing to define human sexuality based on what the secular world says instead of fighting for the inerrant and unwavering truth of the Bible.

We see people who grew up in the church having their hearts and minds blinded as they go through a process of deconstructing their faith until they ultimately abandon Christianity or transform it into something that doesn't even resemble the faith laid down in scripture.

We see conservative Christians who are putting more trust in fighting issues and electing the right people instead of reaching out to their neighbors with the life and culture changing reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And we see believers and churches that are more concerned with fighting culture wars on the internet than they are with knowing, treasuring, and preaching the Word of God. And this is true regardless of what side they are on.

In all of these things we are in danger of becoming people who hear, but don't understand, and see, but don't perceive. We are in danger of missing God and his simple call to know him, love him, and trust him, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

And if we, the church in America, continue down this path and put our hope and trust in something else besides him, then our end will be judgement, and we may be in danger of hearing the fateful words of Jesus in Matthew 7:23 when he says:

Matthew 7:23

[23] ... 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

So my call to all of us is to take seriously this warning from Isaiah. Examine your heart to see where you have placed your hope and trust. Is it in our great God? Or is it in some other earthly institution, philosophy, or cultural religion?

And in that process if you come to the realization that you have been living for and trusting in something else besides the triune ruler of the universe, I want to first call you to confession and repentance. Confess your sin to God and turn to him with faith and humility.

But second, I want to encourage you with good news. And this good news is the reality that the whole of Scripture is pointing to including much of the book of Isaiah. And it is this:

3. That grace and forgiveness are available through Christ (Isa. 6:5-7, 13).

[5] And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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 burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

*[13] And though a tenth remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak,
whose stump remains
when it is felled."*

The holy seed is its stump.

Isaiah, after seeing the reality of this grand vision of God was so overcome his own sin and the sin of the people of Judah that he proclaims that "he is lost." Meaning, that he is assuming that he is going to be destroyed.

And it would have been within God's right, as a Holy and Perfect God to not only wipe out Isaiah, but also to completely wipe out the people of Judah. **Because they are a sinful people who deserve nothing but God's wrath. But God in his mercy and goodness doesn't do that.**

Instead, he has the Seraphim take a coal and press it against Isaiah's lips as a way to symbolically show Isaiah that God has taken his guilt away and has atoned for his sin.

And then when he sent Isaiah out to proclaim judgement on Judah, he doesn't leave them without hope either. But instead ends verse 13 by saying *"the holy seed (offspring) is the stump."* Meaning, that though he is bringing judgement upon them, he won't completely destroy them.

Instead, there will be a remnant of Judah that he chooses to pour his goodness and grace upon. And it will be from this remnant that God will raise up a shoot and a branch that will not only be for the flourishing of the remnant, but also for all people from all nations who come to him.

As it says in Isaiah 11: 1, 10-11

Isaiah 11:1, 10-11

[1] There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

[10] In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

[11] In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

And we know that this branch and shoot from the root of Jesse who bears fruit and gathers the nations and the remnant to himself is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The one as it says in Isaiah 53:12 who:

"...bore the sins of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors"

And in so doing he has not only given us as his people grace and forgiveness, but he has healed us through his death on the cross so that we now can be free of sin and can live for his good and righteous purposes. Look at the following verses:

Ephesians 1:7

[7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

1 Peter 2:24

[24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

This is the apex of the grand message that Isaiah was trying to communicate. That God is holy, and because God is holy, judgement is coming upon his people because of their sin.

Yet he hasn't left them without hope. Instead, a Savior is coming. And we know that he has come in the person and work of Christ to redeem a people for himself.

Now I realize that this can feel like information that we already know and therefore don't need to really talk about. But it is something that we continually need to be bringing to our minds and hearts.

That we are not left to fend for ourselves in our sin, but that there is real hope for us that is found full and wholly in the work of Christ on our behalf.

So I want to encourage you this morning, if you are walking in sin, if you are feeling the weight of your guilt and you feel condemned, **turn to Christ.**

He is the fountain of living water who not only gives you new life but has freely and fully forgiven you of all your sin for all time so that you can live in the joy and assurance that you are a child of the living God.

And not only does he want you to live in the assurance that you are his child. But he also wants each of us to live in and take seriously the reality that this isn't our home and that he is coming back for us. This is our final reality this morning:

4. That God's glorious kingdom is coming (Isa. 2:2-4).

Isaiah 2:2-4

*[2] It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,*

*[3] and many peoples shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."*

*For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

[4] He shall judge between the nations,

*and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.*

God's grand vision for his people as proclaimed through Isaiah opens with 2 chapters that feel like an introductory summary of the whole book that is then worked out over 64 other chapters. Chapter 1 is all about God's judgement, but then comes chapter 2 which doesn't allow us to wallow in the pain of God's wrath.

Instead, it encourages and excites our hearts with the hopeful reality of the latter days. That this current world and God's judgement aren't the end. But instead, there is a glorious time coming when God will come back and will establish the mountain of the house of the Lord.

Meaning that God is going to come back and renew his creation and dwell with his people here on earth. As it says in Isaiah 65:17-18:

Isaiah 65:17-18

*[17] "For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.*

*[18] But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.*

And if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, this applies to you. But I want you to know that though this reality is comforting and hopeful, God hasn't given this vision to Isaiah merely for our comfort.

Instead, this whole book, and this whole message this morning, that God is our holy creator, that judgement is coming, that grace and forgiveness are available through Christ, and that glory is also coming, are meant to remind us that this world and all that is in it can't save us. Only Christ can.

And this should stir our hearts and grow within us a desire to be a people that continually confess our sin, turn to Christ, and live out and proclaim the excellences of our great God and king. To be a people who heed the words of Isaiah 2:5 when he says:

Isaiah 2:5

***[5] O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.***

Because judgement is real, what you see today is passing away, and in the end, Christ is coming.

Let's pray.