

THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY

(Kingdom Series 1 of 3)

Isaiah 6:1-13

Key Verse: 6:3

“And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’”

Isaiah chapter 6 describes a vision Isaiah saw of the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, as the King, the Lord Almighty. In the vision, angels were calling out to one another, **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”** Isaiah felt utterly doomed by his sins before the holy God. But God forgave Isaiah’s sin and commissioned him to speak the Lord’s message to his people.

A kingdom requires a king and a people. A good king saves, protects and leads his people. A good king restores the fortunes of his people and liberates them from their enemies. Such a king is our God, and our Savior Jesus Christ.

We are now preparing for our International conference with the theme, **“His Kingdom.”** The Kingdom of God is the main theme of the Bible and of Jesus’ preaching. So for three weeks we want to meditate more on God’s kingdom and kingship. Through Isaiah 6 may we get a glimpse of the holy, almighty, glorious God on his throne, who rules his people with righteousness and mercy. May people from over 68 nations gather and get a glimpse of God’s kingdom at the Bible conference in Louisville.

First, “I saw the Lord” (1-3). The prophet Isaiah served the Lord for an estimated 58 years (739-681 B.C.). Both northern and southern Israel were abandoning God in favor of idols and their own desires and plans. Northern Israel was soon to be conquered by the Assyrian Empire (722 B.C.). Isaiah warned his people in Judah (the southern kingdom) to turn back to God, or God’s judgment would fall on them too. In chapters 1-5, he describes their sinful condition as idolatrous, wicked, unfaithful and self-serving. Many “woes” are pronounced upon God’s chosen people. They “rejected the law of the LORD Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel” (5:24).

Chapter 6 begins with the words: **“In the year that King Uzziah died...”** According to 2 Chronicles 26, King Uzziah of Judah was prosperous and powerful. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success. The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful. But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the

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LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. As a result, the LORD afflicted him with leprosy, a disease he had until the day he died.

Isaiah retells his personal experience of what happened in the year that King Uzziah died. Look at verses 1-4:

“I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, 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.”

Isaiah had a vision of the LORD. God gave this mortal man a vision of God’s kingdom and glory. What did Isaiah see in his vision and what did it reveal about God? In his vision, he saw God as the holy and Almighty King on his throne. The LORD God was seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. The LORD is King in his temple. Not only that, the temple is not big enough to contain God. Even the highest heavens cannot contain God. God is the King of the universe. The LORD is King over all nations and peoples, even over those who ignore or deny him.

When we look at the nations, it appears that the nations with wealth and military power are the nations in charge. Powerful nations and wealthy rulers have at times caused the world to tremble in fear and worry. In human history, many empires rose and fell—empires like Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Various tyrants have arisen in history to rule over their people. But they all disappear within a few years or at most a few decades. There is only one kingdom that will never perish or fade away.

The prophet Daniel spoke of this eternal dominion of the Lord, and of his anointed king: **“His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed”** (Dan 7:14). The apostle John spoke similar words: **“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever”** (Rev 11:15).

The LORD God reigns for ever and ever, whether we realize it or accept it or not. Only the Lord’s kingdom will never perish or fade. How foolish it is to try to establish or build our own personal or national kingdoms in this world. All of

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them will perish and fade away some day. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is Lord of all. His kingdom will never end.

The Dutch prime minister and theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) coined the words: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!” So often we live in the delusion that though we are small, weak, and ignorant, we are the owners and controllers of our own little lives. We think: my success and happiness depends on my hard work, my effort, my understanding and wisdom. Apostle James reminds us: **“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes”** (Jas 4:14). You and I are mists that appear for a little while and then vanish. As Apostle Peter said, borrowing the words of Isaiah: **“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever”** (1Pe 1:24-25; Isa 40:6-8).

In Isaiah’s vision he saw 6-winged angels or seraphim. “Seraphim” means “burning ones,” perhaps because they are burning with zeal for God, or their appearance is fiery. The prophet Ezekiel had a similar angelic vision: **“The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it”** (Eze 1:13).

The angels that Isaiah saw had 6 wings: with 2 wings they covered their faces, so as not to look directly at God; with 2 wings they covered their feet, to cover their nakedness; and with 2 wings they were flying above God’s throne. And they were calling to one another: **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”**

This seems to be the unending call of angels around the throne of God. Apostle John wrote Revelation about 800 years after Isaiah’s vision. Yet the angels around God’s throne say the same words. Revelation 4:8 says, **“Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty; who was, and is, and is to come.’”**

Angels cry, **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.”** The LORD is holy, holy, holy. The LORD God is completely set apart from his creation, for he is the Almighty Creator God. There is no one like the Lord. The Lord is totally other.

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Many people visit Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon to see something awesome and inspiring and breath-taking. I can only imagine what it will be like to see God, the holy God, in his glory.

Whenever Moses spoke with God in the Tent of Meeting his face became shiny. Moses once made a bold request of God, **“Now show me your glory.”** God said to him, **“When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen”** (Ex 33:18,22-23).

One of the psalm writers made a similar request as Moses: **“One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple”** (Ps 27:4).

The angels declared, **“the whole earth is full of his glory.”** What is the glory of the Lord? It is his goodness, his honor, his renown, his radiance, his presence. When God dwelt among his people Israel, his presence appeared as a radiant cloud of glory.

Yet when we look at the world, we often see much distress, darkness and gloom. Some of it is caused by natural disasters. Still, much of it is caused by man’s sin and selfishness. Then how is the whole earth full of God’s glory?

The earth is full of God’s glory through his presence and work all around us. When we recognize the work of God in a person’s words and actions, we get a glimpse of God’s glory. When we see the beautiful handiwork of God in a sunset or a starlit sky and praise him, we experience the glory of the Master Potter. When people are moved to tears of love and compassion, we sense God’s glory.

God’s glory is revealed in his creation. It was revealed when he saved his people out of slavery in Egypt by his mighty hand. God’s glory was revealed when he delivered his people again and again from their enemies. God’s glory was most powerfully revealed in the life and person of Jesus Christ.

Apostle John wrote, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”** (Jn 1:14). When we live in the grace of Jesus Christ, we can say with the angels, **“The whole earth is full of his glory!”**

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Second, “I am ruined!” (4-7). Isaiah was privileged to see a vision of God’s glory. But he did not feel privileged or run to tell somebody. Rather, he felt the doom of his sins as he stood in front of the holy God.

Look at verse 5. **“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.”** The closer we get to God, the more we see our own sins, for the light of his glory exposes our darkness. Before seeing this vision, Isaiah probably felt superior to his people, even self-righteous. Perhaps he complained about the depravity and sinsickness of his people. But when he saw the vision of God on his throne, he despaired in his own wretchedness and cried out, **“Woe to me! I am ruined! I’m a man of unclean lips!”** He felt he would die before this glorious vision. Isaiah found himself as a sinner who could only cry out for mercy. This is the consistent response of sinners who come into the presence of God. When we meet God personally, we see, perhaps for the first time, our utter need for God’s mercy and forgiveness. This was like Moses at the burning bush; Peter before Jesus at the great catch of fish; Saul of Tarsus when he was blinded by the light of Jesus on the road to Damascus.

At the moment Isaiah felt he was doomed, God extended his mercy. Look at verses 6-7. **“Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs 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.’”** With fire from the altar, God took away Isaiah’s guilt and atoned for his sin.

We too have the blessing and mercy of God offered to all to take away our guilt and sin through the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Romans 3:25 says, **“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.”** Again, 1 John 2:2 says of Jesus, **“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”** Once more, Acts 10:43 says, **“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”**

Third, “Here am I! Send me” (8-13). After Isaiah’s guilt was taken away and his sin atoned for, he had a change of heart. He was interested and concerned with the things of God. He heard the LORD’s voice saying, **“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”** And Isaiah volunteered, **“Here am I. Send me!”** Until then, Isaiah was in his own little world, doing his own little thing. But after

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experiencing the grace and mercy of God, Isaiah wanted to participate in God's business.

God accepted Isaiah's application. But the job description was not promising. God said to Isaiah: **"Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."**

In a word, God was sending Isaiah to a disobedient and obstinate people. They would not want to hear God's word or see God's vision or understand with their hearts. They would prefer to stay in their sickness rather than be healed.

Isaiah was a little worried about this commission from God. So he asked, **"For how long, Lord?"** For how long would Isaiah have to go and preach to uninterested people? God's answer was not very encouraging:

"Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste."

This sounded like the most discouraging mission anyone could go on. Who wants to preach with no results, but rather see ruin, waste and disaster? Yet God gave a glimmer of hope in this prophecy: **"But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."**

God foretold of the stump of a holy seed. This holy seed is ultimately the Stump of Jesse, Jesus Christ. He is the hope of all nations. In every generation there is also a holy seed who will respond to God's message. Apostle Paul called it a remnant, chosen by grace. There was a remnant of 7000 in the time of Elijah who had not bowed the knee to Baal. There is a remnant in our generation who are repenting and believing in Jesus and who are living for him. There are people turning to God by his grace.

Where do we stand? Do we look at a fallen world and want to give up? Do we just want to join in the despair and self-seeking and get as much as we can while we can? To do that is to live in sin and rebellion.

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That is how I lived when I was without hope in Jesus Christ. By the grace of God, I accepted the forgiveness of my sins through Jesus Christ and started living for his glory. Since then I have been preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, whatever the response, whether good or bad.

If preaching the gospel of Jesus fails to yield good results, should we stop sharing this good news, or should we change the message to be more appealing? We might as well ask: Is God no longer on his throne? For how long must we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ? For as long as God reigns in glory. Until Jesus Christ comes again in glory.

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