

**Isaiah 6:1-7**  
**“Seeing the Infinite Center of Our Worship”**  
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I. Introduction

A. Audrey the cat

II. Isaiah’s vision of the Throne

B. Isaiah had a vision of the Lord seated in the temple.

- i. Although he was familiar with worship as it was conducted in the physical realm, he was now seeing worship from within the spiritual realm.
  - i. This Spiritual world is no less real than the physical, and the worship of God taking place around us there is the reality our earthly worship imitates.
- ii. Isaiah’s first impression was of immensity: The Lord was high, exalted (or lifted up), and his very robes filled the temple itself!

C. The creatures worshipping the Lord

- i. Verse 2: “*Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two wings they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.*”
- ii. New beings. Aliens. Things out of Isaiah’s reckoning.
  - a. “Seraphs,” when translated, merely means “burning ones”.
  - b. This is the only time these beings are mentioned in Scripture.
  - c. Notice their humility before the Lord. Their faces and feet are hidden, which would have spoken of humility to Isaiah’s mind. They were not worthy to even look upon the Lord.
  - d. It’s important to note here that these were not fallen beings, like us. They had no sin and were able to be in the presence of almighty God. Yet still, in their purity, they knew that to look upon God was beyond their rights or abilities.

D. What they called out

- i. Verse 3: “*And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.’*”
- ii. What is this word, “holy”?
  - a. Holiness refers to His essential nature. It’s not so much an attribute of God as it is simply who He is!
  - b. His Divine sacredness
  - c. His separateness, His “otherness” from all creation.
  - d. Holiness refers to His moral perfection; His holiness is shown in total righteousness and purity.
  - e. The majesty and awesomeness of God.
  - f. His very being provokes awe and fear.
- iii. He is all this times three! Saying it once was not enough for these “burning ones”.
  - a. Not necessarily a reference to the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).
  - b. More an illustration of the inadequacy of words to take in and describe this holy, this *indescribable* God.
- iv. “*The whole earth is full of His glory.*”
  - a. The glory of God can be seen in all of creation.
  - b. In this passage, we see both the “transcendence” of God (His “otherness”), *and* His “immanence”, or nearness.
  - c. Holiness, by definition, means to be set apart.
  - d. Here, however, the very earth is *full* of His glory. The very God that is apart sets Himself in our very midst!
    1. Hosea said something similar when he wrote: “*For I am God, and not man – the Holy One among you.*” (Hosea 11:9)
  - e. The fact that in His holiness, He would deign to walk among us is astounding.
- v. Calling *to* one another
  - a. Notice to whom the seraphs are calling: each other!
  - b. Obviously, in worship we can call out *to* the Lord, especially in prayer.
    1. However, this shows us a vital aspect of worship that I often miss: Worship itself tells *others* of the greatness of God! The very idea of the word “praise” is to tell others about the person or thing that is worthy of glory.
  - c. Quite often, we as the Church feel we must treat evangelism and worship as two separate practices.
    1. However, this sometimes misses the point.
  - d. When the world sees us worship God, whether corporately, or in the day-to-day activities of our lives, they get to see something of what God is like.
  - e. There is no need to simplify, or even “dumb down” God as we witness with our lives, both in words and actions.

1. A relationship with a real person will always entail complexity and mystery.
  2. Our relationship with a real God should be no different.
  - f. As believers sharing the Gospel, we want to tell people of the union they can have with the triune God, not just how to stay out of Hell.
  - g. When our witness is about the “fire-insurance”, then the focus of our worship has shifted from the very real God onto our own selves, and our desire for self-preservation.
- vi. The Sound of Worship
- a. “*At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*”
  - b. The thresholds were the large foundation stones on which the doorposts stood.
  - c. For these to shake was to experience power beyond human reckoning, and to have one’s reference for stability put in doubt.
    1. Imagine having your expectations of what God is like suddenly thrown out, and your very grasp of reality seems tenuous.
    2. This was where Isaiah found himself, blinded by God’s glory, deafened by the sound of angels’ praise, and the very earth shaking beneath his feet.
    3. When Heaven is described as eternal worship, our immediate reaction might be to think of it all as boring.
      - a. However, in the presence of almighty God, we will be unable to do anything else.
      - b. And as His redeemed children, it will be joyful beyond comprehension.
      - c. We have had a taste. The banquet still awaits.

### III. Isaiah’s Response

- A. However, Isaiah is still lost in his sin as he stands before the throne.
- B. 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.’*”
- C. Crude illustration from a rock concert. (A musical hero)
- D. Similar with our “goodness” as people.
  - i. We feel pretty good until confronted with perfection.
  - ii. To come before God thinking our goodness is worthy of acceptance would be the worst of arrogance.
  - iii. The goodness we have to offer is not wholly evil, but it certainly cannot save us or overcome our sin.
  - iv. In comparison to God’s holiness, it suddenly becomes dirty rags.
- E. How does one respond when taken into the presence of God Almighty?
  - i. Again, even the unfallen angels covered their faces before the throne of God.
  - ii. Isaiah was looking upon the perfect holiness and purity, combined with the absolute power and sovereignty of Yahweh.
  - iii. The difference between himself and God was like a blow that knocked him flat.
  - iv. “*I am ruined!*”
    - a. I am *undone, unmade, made to cease, cut off, doomed to die.*
    - b. Such is the forceful presence of God’s perfection!
  - v. A. W. Tozer writes: “*But here Isaiah was an astonished man. He was struck with awe, his whole world suddenly dissolving into a vast, eternal brightness. He was pinned against that brightness – red and black, the colors of sin. What has happened? Isaiah, only human, had glimpsed One whose character and nature signaled perfection. He could only manage the witness: ‘Mine eyes have seen the King.’*”
- F. Unclean Lips?
  - i. This probably symbolized his attitudes and actions as well as his words, for a person’s words can ultimately reflect his thinking and relate to his actions.
  - ii. Even worse, in his impurity, he has “seen the King, the Lord Almighty”. He suddenly had nowhere to go, nowhere to escape.
  - iii. This is the response to sin when God reveals Himself to one he is calling. Our eyes are opened, and we see our need for salvation!
  - iv. In fact, all we can bring to the throne is our need itself.

### IV. The Son

- B. Here is why this is a beautiful thing...
  - vii. Centuries later, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John referred to this event in Isaiah’s life.
    - a. In John 12:41, when writing about the unbelief of the witnesses to Jesus’ ministry, he mentions Isaiah’s vision.
    - b. “*‘He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn – and I would heal them.’ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about Him.*”
  - viii. Who was Isaiah looking at, high and lifted up? Jesus Himself! The pre-incarnate Christ!
  - ix. The Son, second member of the Holy Trinity, before He took on human flesh; the same God who would become man and eventually become *sin* on our behalf on a Roman cross.

- x. The same God who said “Let the children come to me,” who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, who touched the lepers when no one else would, who fought for the gentiles who were barred from the Temple by the moneychangers, who ate and drank with prostitutes and extortionists, was looking at Isaiah from the throne of heaven.
- xi. The Jesus we sing about, who’s name we even use as a curse word, is this very God whose glory fills the temple before Isaiah’s eyes.
- xii. How might this impact our worship, our very view of this Jesus of Nazareth?

V. What did Jesus provide? Salvation!

- A. Verses 6-7: “*Then one of the seraphs 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.’*”
- B. True worship must reflect the whole story, and while Isaiah had experienced the bad news of his sin in the presence of God, the good news was about to be revealed!
  - i. Christ himself provides the means of atonement, symbolized in this burning coal.
    - a. The symbol of Isaiah’s sin, his unclean lips, is purified by fire, cleansing the impurity and making him able to stand before the throne unashamed.
    - b. Isaiah knew there was nothing within his own power that could make him acceptable to God.
    - c. But Christ called him and made him able to stand, humble but unashamed before his Lord.
- G. This is where we stand, as the adopted children of Yahweh: Forgiven and purified before the very throne of Heaven and Earth.
  - i. This is our Gospel message that we bring to the world!
  - ii. The God who is “other” came to us. Transcendence and Immanence together in a glorious, merciful paradox.

VI. Application

- A. Christian spirituality is unique.
  - i. We not only serve God, seeking to do his will, submitting ourselves before Him.
  - ii. No, we dare not start or stop there.
- B. We are called into a love relationship with Him, into union with Him: This very Christ whom Isaiah saw on the throne.
- C. In fact, we have been invited into communion with the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit.
  - i. God did not create us out of need.
  - ii. He created us to share in the perfect, uniting love that already flowed within the Trinity from eternity to eternity.
- D. How easily we gradually, unconsciously set up a simplified image of Him that we become comfortable worshiping and telling people about.
  - i. A God we can control.
  - ii. A God who loves like we do, and behaves like we expect Him to.
  - iii. A God who even looks like us and loves like us and will give us what we want if we ask or live the right way.
- E. Isaiah, yes, even Isaiah, did this, and was shocked when the truth of God’s power was revealed!
- F. Please hear everything I’m about to say.
  - i. If some of this is heard out of context, it would be heresy.
- G. Although knowing some things about God and His character is vital, this relationship is not ultimately founded on knowing A, B or C about Him, a mere intellectual transaction.
  - i. That would be like saying the key to a healthy marriage is properly signing the wedding certificate and observing the proper tax laws regarding marriage.
- H. The truth is, there’s always more to learn about Yahweh. He doesn’t fit our molds. He does not exist so we can win theological arguments.
- I. Yet, through Scripture and through Jesus Himself, He has revealed enough of Himself to us that we can **know Him** more and more each day, not just know things **about Him**.
  - i. Even the demons know loads about God, perhaps more than we ever could, and it has not saved them.
- J. C. S. Lewis, in his book, *The Great Divorce*, Described the problem well:
  - i. *There have been men before now who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself ... as if the good Lord had nothing to do but exist! There have been some who were so occupied in spreading Christianity that they never gave a thought to Christ. Man! Ye see it in smaller matters. Did ye never know a lover of books that with all his first editions and signed copies had lost the power to read them? Or an organizer of charities that had lost all love for the poor? It is the subtlest of all the snares.*
- K. In the same way there is always more to learn about my bride, even after 17 years of marriage.
  - i. I love spending time with Cathy, discovering new things about how she thinks, how she dreams, and how she cooks.
  - ii. To be honest, this marriage, this union, is not always fun.
    - a. She challenges me, corrects me, pushes and pulls me.
    - b. And this is as it should be.

- c. If she never slips outside my expectations and desires, then our relationship is a pretend relationship, a sham, and will eventually fall apart.
- L. Now, please hear me. I am NOT saying that study of Scripture, the seeking of truth, the pursuit of the knowledge of God is unimportant.
  - i. The opposite! God's love for us impels us to know more of Him, to seek to know His truth.
  - ii. We seek to know more of Him because we love Him, not because we want to control Him.
  - iii. However, the knowledge *itself* is not the point. God is!
  - iv. He is the Infinite Center of our worship.
    - a. He is the focus, yet we will never exhaust all there is to know of Him.
  - v. Finding, or creating, a God we can control is actually idolatry, and is to be avoided!
  - vi. What is my motivation for seeking knowledge of God? Mine has often been pride, arrogance, even fear of losing control. Most often it is this last one that captures my heart and binds it.
  - vii. God doesn't offer us control over Himself. He merely offers Himself, as He is.
  - viii. This is the God revealed in Scripture. All of Scripture. Not just the parts I happen to like!
  - ix. Am I ready to accept Him as He is? I can start with worship.
  - x. Rule of Thumb: If my theology does not lead to doxology, then my theology is in error. If my understanding and knowing of God does not lead me to fall to my knees in worship, then I have missed something vital.
- M. The greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself."
- N. Is this what we are showing the world? In our actions, our words, our use of our time, our money, our power, and especially our worship? Are we showing them a God beyond full description? Or are we merely trying to sell a homogenized God that comes when we call Him?
  - i. When the American world sees Christianity, they so often see this.
  - ii. They see prosperity gospel, claiming that God wants us to be prosperous, not only spiritually but materially as well.
    - a. Apparently, Paul and the other apostles were miserable failures in their relationship with God...
  - iii. They see faith healers on television throwing the Holy Spirit over their congregations like so much pixy dust.
    - a. Thus they see an impersonal god easily controlled by his followers like the force or the magic from a Hogwarts wand.
  - iv. They see a God who desperately needs money in order to do anything of value.
    - a. Thus they see a powerless god who has bought into the world system, just like the ministers who have \$20,000 toilets and who own private golf courses.
  - v. They see a god tied to one political ideology.
    - a. Thus they see a god who is mean-spirited and unable to work outside of a narrow political system of thought.
  - vi. They see a God of a certain race, ethnicity or social background.
    - a. Thus they see a god of bigotry and hatred, or at least a God of indifference.
  - vii. They see a god who only accepts those that are morally pure and have figured it all out.
    - a. They are thus defeated before they start, either hopeless or cynical in their view of God.
    - b. Then they see church leaders fail morally, and see a god that is apparently not really there after all.
- O. Instead, may we show the world a God who is beyond our perfect comprehension, yet has revealed Himself in Christ.
  - i. May we show them our lives as living sacrifices of worship, day by day, that they may desire to know more of the transcendent God who came close to touch, close enough to die for us.
  - ii. May this God inform our actions and inspire our words.
- P. You know, there are parts of my Bible that I don't understand yet.
  - i. There are parts of God's character that puzzle me, even upset me at times.
- Q. But my eyes have seen enough of the King's glory to know that He loves me, and I want to know more of Him.
  - i. I want to love Him better each day.
- R. For this is the God who pursued me and caught me and adopted me as His eternal son, and He'll never let me go.
  - i. Why? I have no idea, other than He chose to, and He is faithful.
- S. This is my God, and I want to cry out to the world like a "burning one": "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is full of His glory!"
  - i. I don't want to stand outside the door anymore like my cat.
    - a. I want to come in and finally rest.
  - ii. And as I worship God with everything I have and everything I do, may the world see Him instead of me, and want to know more of the real God that would adopt them and call them to Himself.