

A Life Changing Vision

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[0 : 00] Hello and welcome and let's just pray before we begin. God and Father we thank you for your word, that we have it in our language, that we can openly read it.

And we pray that you will speak to each one tonight as we open it up. We pray these things in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. So to get us going, I want you to go with me.

So we're in a spaceship, we're on our way to the International Space Station. And we get there, we look down on the earth for the very first time from space.

We see its fullness. We see the light, the colours of it. We see the vastness of the space. We also see the stillness.

You know, nothing could prepare you for that sight of seeing that for the first time. No matter how many pictures you'd seen or videos you'd watched, I don't think anything could prepare you for that sight.

[1 : 06] You know, this is actually called the overview effect. There is a term for this phenomena. And it really changes astronauts' lives. There's many reported instances where astronauts return completely changed.

Whether it's their priorities or their perspective on life. They come back, change people. They see the fragility of life on this small planet.

They see themselves as being so small. They also see themselves as global citizens rather than individual nations. You know, seeing the earth in this full way, it shatters what the astronauts previously thought about life.

It causes a change of their priorities and their perspective. Why are we talking about this? Well, tonight, Isaiah sees a vision which is far greater and more life-changing than seeing the earth.

To have a bit of a catch-up, so we are in Isaiah chapter 6. Isaiah is written around 700 BC. The nation of Israel is split into the kingdom of Israel in the north, whose capital is Samaria.

[2 : 27] And the kingdom of Judah in the south, whose capital is Jerusalem. Isaiah is speaking in this book predominantly to God's people.

God's covenant people, the line of Abraham, the people of Israel. And we've had five chapters before this, which we've gone through in the last few weeks.

And these are really like summary of the prophecies in this book. You can imagine them like a sky full of heavy, dark clouds. And yet, you know, when you get those little rays of light shining through these dark clouds, this is what the first five chapters are like.

Because we see the judgment, this dark judgment on this faithless nation of Judah. Some words quoting from the first five chapters, we see that they have rebelled.

They are sinful. They have stumbled. They have fallen. That the Lord will strike. But we also see these glimmering bits of light.

[3 : 31] There is hope in this judgment. We see that the house of the Lord shall be established. That they will be lifted up. That they will be the people of Zion. So where does that leave us?

Well, in chapter six, we see Isaiah's commissioning. It marks a new section of this book. We're going to split it into three different sections.

First of all, we're going to look at the glory of the Lord in verses one to four. Secondly, we're going to look at the redemption of Isaiah in five to eight.

We're also then thirdly going to look at the judgment and hope of God's people in verses nine to 13. So first of all, the glory of the Lord.

Verses one to four. Please have it open in front of you and go with it through me. Through it with me. So we see that King Uzziah dies.

[4 : 37] Now we can date this as 740 BC. This is recorded elsewhere. He was called the last godly king of Judah. And yet many years before his death, he had gone against God.

He had lost his way. And this is typical of the nation of Judah. They had started on this moral and cultural decline, which never recovered.

They were on a downward spiral. That's the situation we're in. Now we're going to look at the glory of the Lord. So what does glory mean?

Well, I love a dictionary definition. First of all, the dictionary says that glory means exaltation, praise and honour. Second meaning is something that brings or is worthy of praise.

The third definition is thanksgiving, adoration or worship. And the example is glory be to God.

[5 : 39] It can also mean splendor. So that's what glory means according to the dictionary. But how do we see God's glory here?

Well, Isaiah sees the Lord, a glorious image. In verse one here, we see the Lord in a place of excellence. Follow with me through the words and the phrases that is used here.

High and exalted speaks of his power. Seated on a throne. The Lord is the king of kings. He has a throne.

And unlike Judah's ruling kings, the king of kings is permanent. He is king forever. We also see that the train of his robe filled the temple.

You know, clothes show power. They show status. Royalty across the world have different garments that they wear for special occasions to show who they are.

[6 : 44] Even us, we wear designer goods to show our status or our wealth. And you know, the Lord's robe filled the temple. It shows his fullness and who he is.

We have this in two to four, we see the seraphim. And these are heavenly beings. And we see that they have six wings. Two of which covered their faces.

It speaks of reverence for the Lord. Complete reverence to him. Two of which covered their feet. It shows their humility. Their humbleness.

And the other two they used for flying. They were ready and willing to do God's work. As we see. You know, we see that they are calling to one another.

Holy, holy, holy. You know, this repetition is used for emphasis to show the Lord's purity. To emphasize his holiness.

[7 : 55] He is the Lord Almighty. This is his authority that he has. He is the glory of creation.

The whole earth is full of his glory. He is glorious through creation. We see that the temple, the post shook.

And that it filled with smoke. This is God's presence. God's presence fills the temple. Think of all that imagery.

What a marvelous image that is created in our minds. What a marvelous image that Isaiah saw. Try to grasp the glory of the Lord here.

The respect. The honor. The majesty. A modern word may be the awesomeness of God. But you know, words are not enough.

[8 : 53] And put yourself in Isaiah's shoes here. You know, this is in the days before CGI. This is in the days before blockbuster movies and the Marvel Empire.

Even before virtual reality. You can see why Isaiah responded the way he did. Why he was so shocked. You know, we can never fully see God.

But we would do well to ponder on his greatness and his majesty. Is this the God here described that we hold in our minds?

These four verses are to fill us with awe and wonder at our great big God. Our God is a great big God.

Our God is a great big God. Do we sometimes make God little in our minds and do we doubt God?

Our God is a big God.

[9 : 56] We see how the seraphim acted here. They were in complete reverence to him. And they were ready to serve.

Look at how the posts acted. If the posts were moved, then we should be as well. You know, like the astronauts seeing the earth in this new full vastness, in this new way, God is shown in this way.

And it is to have a life changing effect on us. And you know what happened to Isaiah who's seeing this firsthand? Well, he responds in the appropriate way.

That takes us to our second section, verses 5 to 8, the redemption of Isaiah. The redemption of Isaiah.

God's glory, his worthiness, it throws Isaiah into personal confession of his own unworthiness. We see this in verse 5.

[11:10] Isaiah says, Woe to me. This reminds us of what Luca was going through last week with all the woes of chapter 5. Now this woe is a legal term for being ruined or for being dead.

He follows it up by saying, I am ruined. I am a man of unclean lips. Isaiah is saying here that he is not worthy, that he has sinned.

It's a personal confession of his own position. You know, Moses actually uses this same phrase. He uses, he says that he is a man of unclean lips when he is arguing with God why he should not go to Pharaoh.

He's saying, Moses was saying that I am not good enough to do this for you. We see that Isaiah says, he lives among a people of unclean lips.

And his eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty. You know, seeing God is associated with death in the Old Testament. Moses, again, he asked to see the Lord's glory.

[12:31] And yet what God does is that God puts him in a cleft of a rock and God passes by. And Moses was only allowed to glimpse the Lord's back to see his glory.

Exodus 33, in this episode, it says, you cannot see my face for no one shall see me and live. So you can see Isaiah's fear and his worry here, his unworthiness.

You think of the New Testament, Saul or Paul was blinded in Acts chapter nine because the Lord's presence came upon him. He was blinded until made well again.

Grasping the glory of the Lord should cause personal confession of our own unworthiness, our own sinfulness, our own hopelessness. How often, myself included, do we think we're okay, that we're not that bad?

It's only with comparison to the holy, holy, holy Lord Almighty, do we see how we really are. A colleague the other day was describing how during homeschooling, as many people are doing at the moment, that his son keeps finishing his maths work in the record time that it's so quick and he's chuffed, he's chuffed that he's done it so quickly.

[13:58] But you know, it's only when the answers are compared to and he's actually got them all wrong because he's rushed them, do we see how he really got on. For us, it's only in comparison to the holy, almighty Lord that we realise that we are ruined.

This personal confession leads to Isaiah's sin being atoned for by grace in verses 6 and 7. we see that a live coal is taken from the altar and that his guilt is taken away and his sin is atoned for.

This altar that this coal was taken from would have been where the blood sacrifices were burnt in the temple. The blood sacrifices atoned for the sin.

You know, Jesus' blood was shed 2,000 years ago and this act can reconcile us to God.

Jesus has paid the price through his sacrificial death so that our guilt can be taken away so that our sin can be atoned for. We need to have this personal confession as Isaiah did of our own sinfulness, our own unworthiness before God.

[15:28] You'll notice here that Isaiah didn't do the work. He didn't do anything. It was done for him. The coal was brought to him and put upon his own lips.

That is like us. The Lord Jesus has done the work we need to accept and confess. And you know, Isaiah's name, it means salvation is from the Lord.

Salvation is not from within. It is from the Lord. In verse 8, we see that Isaiah responds to God's call of service.

The Lord says, whom shall I send and who will go for us? God calls Isaiah here. He was chosen to see this vision.

He was chosen here. What does Isaiah do? Well, he says, here am I. Send me. The willing servant responds in love to the call.

[16:40] You know, Isaiah can only respond in this way because of what has happened to him, because his guilt has been taken away. because his sin is atoned for. His newfound position in God's eyes means that he can respond in love to go and speak to the nation of Judah, to God's people.

We are called to serve God also, and not out of a sense of repayment or some sense of duty, but in response and love to what the Lord has done for us already.

And you see that Isaiah responded. He didn't negotiate. He didn't know what was coming. It wasn't conditional. Like Moses, who argued, who negotiated, they said he wasn't good enough. Isaiah just answers the call faithfully. You know, back in primary school, we used to have a particular teacher who quite often used to ask, right, who wants to do something for me? You know, most people, including myself, would volunteer, me, me, me, me, me, me, I want to do it. Most of the time because it involved getting out of the class so you could muck about in the corridors for a while en route. You know, the teacher would always say, you don't even know what it is yet that I'm asking you to do.

[18:04] And she was right. And you know, as years went on, the response became less enthusiastic with age and it turned into a few mumbles going, well, depends, depends what it is.

You know, this is not the case for Isaiah. He says, here I am, send me. We are called to do God's work. Whether or not it suits us or whether it piques our interest.

We are to do so out of love and thankfulness to our Lord and Saviour. We have been chosen. So finally, we see the judgment and hope of God's people in verses 9 to 13.

We see the judgment for Judah, the unbelieving people. In verses 9 to 13a, 13 and a half. Judgment for Judah, the unbelieving people.

Isaiah is called to be God's voice to Judah. You know, the people of Judah were God's covenant chosen people. And yet, this is a really bleak picture.

[19:22] When reading this for the first time, I wrote beside it bleak. Isaiah is told that his ministry here will not be successful. The people are completely opposite to Isaiah's new position.

The people are deaf. They are blind. They do not understand. Whereas Isaiah, he has seen, he has heard, and he understands. Isaiah has seen the Lord.

The people do not see. The people are in the dark. He is in the light. Judah were a nation of hardened hearts.

You know, there was continual disbelief from Judah. This wasn't their first chance. It was continual rejection of God.

This shows the hardening effect here of the gospel. And it is the same for us nowadays. But this is actually should be an encouragement to us.

[20:30] Stay with me. We aren't to be downhearted or we aren't to be, see ourselves as failures when the gospel doesn't reach people, when they do not respond to what we are trying to say or when we invite them along to various events.

It is God who saves. We are to faithfully do his work, to witness, to speak his word, but it is God who saves.

in verse 11, in pain, Isaiah says, for how long, Lord?

You know, these were his people, this was his nation. He would want them to see and believe like him. We should want those around us, those whom we love, to see and believe like we do.

we see that Judah will be ruined, this word ruined again. You know, after this in chapter seven onwards, we see that the nation of Judah is in war.

[21:43] They go into captivity in Babylon and there is destruction for Judah ahead. But there is this glimmer of hope in verse 13b, 13, the second half of that verse.

There's this glimmer of hope like those light beams shining through the dark clouds. There's this strange image of stumps being left after trees are chopped down.

If you've ever been up on Forestry Commission land, you'll have seen vast areas where the whole trees have been felled and yet they leave the stumps. And you know, these two types of trees that are mentioned, these grow again from that stage.

Branches and roots come out again. There is regeneration. There is new birth. Judgment will take place on this unbelieving nation and yet there is hope.

Grace will abound. This nation does not deserve God's grace and yet they get it anyway. And you know, there will be a remnant, this holy seed.

[22:58] A remnant will return from Babylonian captivity. They will not all be destroyed. You know, Jesus comes from this holy seed. He is the holy seed who is our hope.

In Isaiah chapter 11, which we will come on to in a few weeks time, it says a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots, a branch will bear fruit.

The Lord Jesus is our hope. You know, to finish, like the astronauts who were changed by what they saw in space when they looked down, we are to be transformed by beholding the Lord and his

majesty, his greatness, his awesomeness.

We are to have this big view of God. We should keep in our minds, we should ponder on his greatness, on the glory of the Lord. This is to cause us to respond in confession of our unworthiness and cause us to respond in willing service to him.

Jesus' sacrifice allows us to do so. Allows our sin to be atoned for by grace.

[24 : 28] It allows us to serve him. And we are to go and we are to do as God wants us to. And not just on our own terms, not what suits us, not what piques our interest.

You know, our ministry will not always be fruitful, but we have our hope and are to remain faithful and do his work even in bleak, bleak times.

When we truly see the Lord, we can't help but speak of him. I'm aware that I feel like I've just touched the surface of these verses and also of the glory of the Lord, but I really hope that this has piqued your interest and you want to go away and ponder on his greatness, on his glory.

Let's pray for us as we finish. God and Father, we just thank you for your glory, your majesty, your awesomeness.

Words just don't do it justice, but we just pray that as we think on these things as we go through this week, that we will respond in love to who you are and what you have done for us.

[25 : 45] Personal confession of our own unworthiness, our own position before you, and yet thankfulness in what the Lord Jesus has done, and that we will respond in love and do your work.

Not that suits us, but what you would have us to do. We pray that we will be encouraged that it is you who save, that we are to faithfully witness and to speak your word, and yet you are the one who saves.

Salvation is from the Lord. So we ask your blessing as we think on these things further. We pray that you will speak to us as we think on these things throughout this week and beyond.

So we just pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.