

Holiness to See God

by Glenn Meldrum

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and repentance in experiencing the glory of God and achieving revival.

Scripture: 2 Kings 15:1, Isaiah 6:1, Matthew 11:28, John 3:16, John 3:19, 2 Corinthians 2:15, 1 Peter 1:16, Revelation 1:17

Topics: "Revival", "Holiness"

Description

Glenn Meldrum preaches on the awe-inspiring encounters of the Almighty with humanity, emphasizing the need for divine revelations to transform us. Using Isaiah's vision of the Lord, he delves into nine essential points regarding revival, highlighting the importance of humility, preparation, worship, conviction of sin, and the call to be sent by God. The sermon underscores the revolutionary nature of revival, where transformed individuals become agents of change through holiness and intimate relationship with Christ.

Transcript

The Scriptures abound with awe-inspiring accounts of the Almighty revealing Himself to frail humanity. Church history is also rich with divine encounters where the Lord pulled back the veil so mere mortals could behold His splendor. To gaze upon the Great I Am will utterly change us. Isaiah saw the Lord and shared with us his astounding experience.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, 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. "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." 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." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people" (Isa. 6:1-9a).

There are nine points concerning this theophany (divine manifestation) that will shed some essential light upon the subject of revival.

1. The Year That King Uzziah Died

The reign of King Uzziah is recorded in 2 Kings 15:1-8 and 2 Chronicles 26. He was the eleventh king of Judah, came to power around 783 BC at age sixteen and reigned for fifty-two years. Uzziah's military success extended Israel's borders to the entrance of Egypt. His wise domestic policies built up their defenses and infrastructure.

Zechariah was the king's godly counselor who helped him walk upright before the Lord. When the king was about forty years old Zechariah died and his influence passed away with him. Uzziah began envying some of the pagan priest-kings that defined many eastern monarchies. One day he entered Solomon's temple to perform the duties that were only lawful for a priest. The Mosaic Law limited these responsibilities to the tribe of Levi and specifically to the lineage of Aaron. This unlawful and arrogant act was met by Azariah and eighty priests who undertook to stop the king. The egotistical monarch defied the priests but was unable to stand against God's holy wrath. Leprosy instantly broke out on his forehead and he was ushered out of the temple. Uzziah was forced to live the rest of his days in seclusion because of the contagious disease. Though he was still officially king, from that time on, his son managed the everyday affairs of the realm.

Pride was the downfall of Uzziah! Since God revealed Himself "in the year king Uzziah died" this statement could be allegorically understood as, "in the year that pride died." The pride of the king kept the glory of the Lord from the people. Only when pride died could the glory of God be made known. This sound, Scriptural principle still holds true today. When pride finally dies in the heart of Christians the Almighty will manifest His glory. We are the obstacles to revival, not the Lord. In whatever form our pride takes, it absolutely hinders the move of the Holy Spirit.

2. Dwelling In The Place Of Blessing

Rabbinical tradition claims that Isaiah was a man of some rank, possibly a relative of King Uzziah. He would have been an educated man well acquainted with the Pentateuch and the account of Moses interceding for Israel after they sinned by worshipping the golden calf (Ex. 33). During this season of intercession Moses passionately pleaded with the Lord to see His glory. Isaiah must have had a similar passion. His spiritual hunger drove him to seek the presence of God no matter the cost. Isaiah longed to be near the Lord and was willing to have his entire life undone if only to gaze upon the beauty of His holiness. The prophet had become a desperate man, and desperate men live desperate lives and pray desperate prayers.

Revival is never a time and chance experience. It is always the result of diligent preparation. Isaiah "saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted" because he deliberately prepared for God's visitation even though he did not know what that fully entailed. The Almighty is moved by His people when they passionately desire Him to rend the heavens and come down. The King of creation will reveal His majesty when His subjects have prepared themselves for His self-disclosure. He will not release His glory to unprepared vessels.

3. Isaiah Saw The Lord

The Lord's self-disclosure came to Isaiah in a way that the prophet could understand. Notice that Isaiah described God's throne (the seat of His authority) and the train of His robe (the symbol of His authority), not the One who sits upon the throne. In ancient Eastern and Middle Eastern times the length of the train

on a ruler's robe signified his rank in the kingdom. An emperor would have a robe longer than those who ruled under him. God's train filled the temple. This was a visual statement to Isaiah that he was in the presence of the King of kings who had stepped down out of heaven.

The Lord wanted to burn into Isaiah's heart and mind the reality of His authority and infinite holiness. Only through a confrontation with the holiness of God can we begin to understand that which intellect is unable to fathom. In other words, a man may theologially define God's holiness while never actually grasping it.

The seraphs that dwell in presence of the Lord understand His holiness far better than we do. By privilege, and by choice, they adore the beauty of His holiness. Exuberantly they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Their worship is not a burden to them. Quite the contrary, in the case of Isaiah's vision, their ecstatic praise shook the temple. This is true worship. We who know Christ should unashamedly extol Him in like manner and enthusiasm.

When the apostle John saw the glorified Savior he was overcome by His holiness and majesty. All he could do was fall as a dead man at the feet of his Redeemer (Rev. 1:17). In the fourth chapter of Revelation we are given a glimpse into heaven. There we find angelic beings who cry day and night, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Simultaneously, the twenty-four elders seated around the throne prostrate themselves before the Lamb. The residents of heaven are constantly in awe of the Lord as they gaze upon Him with unveiled eyes. Unfortunately, we walk this planet virtually oblivious to His glory until the day He rends the heavens.

The holiness of God is terrifying and appealing, repulsive and magnetic (2 Cor. 2:15-16). There is a great mystery here--the same holiness that draws some repels others. People who do not want to serve God are repulsed by His presence because they are by nature God-haters even though they may speak of Him in sentimental terms. "Holiness provokes hatred," stated R. C. Sproul. "The greater the holiness, the greater the human hostility towards it. It seems insane. No man was ever more loving than Jesus Christ. Yet even His love made people angry. His love was perfect love, a transcendent and holy love, but His very love brought trauma to people. This kind of love is so majestic we can't stand it" (Sproul, 68).

Most of the religious people of Christ's day were repulsed by His holiness and wanted to kill Him. In contrast, the disinherited of society were drawn to the purity of the Savior's love and craved His transforming power. Those who find the presence of Jesus repulsive on earth will find the fullness of His presence in heaven utterly repugnant. At their eternal judgment they will plead with Jesus to hurl them into hell so they can hide themselves from the face of Him who sits on the throne.

Whenever Christians behold the glory of the Lord they will never be the same. Never again will they be able to live as they once did. Never again will they be content with a mediocre relationship with the Living God. In His presence they will find a love more powerful than sin, a passion more gripping than lust, a treasure worth more than the wealth of the world. Those who desire to be near Jesus may initially be terrified by His majesty as Isaiah was, and yet yearn for the wonder of His nearness all the more.

4. God Was Worshiped

The prophet was given a glimpse of heaven when he beheld the seraphs worshipping the Lord in humility and excitement. Their enthusiastic worship shook the temple. This was the spontaneous reaction of heavenly beings reveling in the presence of the Almighty.

Ignorance of God's awesomeness reduces worship to little more than sing-alongs or lifeless formalities. Tozer pointed out that, "Man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God" (Tozer, Knowledge, 7). Only when we see the Lord high and exalted will we begin to comprehend the privilege and excitement of dwelling in His presence and worship Him as they do in heaven.

Each of the heavenly beings that Isaiah saw had six wings. With two they flew, with two they covered their faces and with two they covered their feet. The covering of face and feet were acts of humility. They knew that it is only by the gift of God that they were allowed to adore the Sovereign Ruler of creation. The seraphs, or "burning ones," were ablaze with the glory of God, for the service of God, because they dwelt in the presence of God. The Lord is a consuming fire and only those who have been consumed by the fire of His presence will be able to spread His fire.

How could anyone dwell in the fire of God's presence and worship Him with indifference? Lifeless worship is a product of cheap Christianity and manmade religion. Such is the creation of people who have a perverted knowledge of the Holy One. By the very fact that they worship Jesus without a burning desire is testimony enough that He is absent from their midst. Isaiah saw the nature of true worship. It was alive and exciting, vibrant and free, filled with loud and joyful acclamations to the glorious eternal Creator. We disgrace Him when we worship Him with half-hearted devotion.

5. The Sin Of The Prophet Revealed

Terrified in the presence of pure holiness Isaiah screamed, "Woe to me!" The word "woe" is a lamentation of being "undone" or "destroyed." The prophet felt totally undone by the glory of the Lord. The awesome holiness of God revealed the depths of his own unholiness. The reality of his sin was laid bare to his conscience. Isaiah knew that if the Judge of all the earth administered justice at that moment he would be justly damned to an eternal hell. His only hope was mercy.

Lack of conviction in the church is directly related to the absence of the Holy Spirit. Whenever God reveals His holiness everything that is unholy is exposed. "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19). Many people, including church folk, fight against revival because they do not want their sin revealed. But there is no other way for revival to come. For a holy God will only dwell with holy people.

Roy Hession writing on Isaiah 6 declared, "The lips are the tools of the heart, and if his lips (Isaiah's) were unclean it was because his heart was unclean. More than that, his lips represented his service: he was a preacher" (Hession, When, 22). The Lord justly accused the prophet/preacher of performing his ministry through unclean lips, which flowed from an impure heart. The glory of the Lord revealed the prophet's true spiritual condition. A man may think his life and ministry pristine until he sees Jesus in His infinite holiness. Oh, how ministers today need to be undone by His manifest presence. It will transform their lives and ministries.

When there is no revival in the local church the fault lies at the feet of the preachers and spiritual leaders. Very few pastors and spiritual leaders have the courage or desire to admit this truth and do something about it. Until the men and women in leadership are willing to let the Spirit expose the wickedness hidden deep in the recesses of their hearts their congregations will never experience genuine revival.

Our only hope is for God, who is infinitely good, to expose the corruption that lies deep within our souls so we may come to repentance. Tozer aptly told us, "Whenever God appeared to men in Bible times the results were the same-an overwhelming sense of terror and dismay, a wrenching sensation of sinfulness and guilt" (Tozer, Knowledge, 77). The power of Christ's blood can cleanse the worst of sinners and transform the worldliest of professed believers. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit is the love of God revealed. The Spirit does this to bring us into deep fellowship with Jesus.

6. The Sin Of God's People Revealed

After the Holy Spirit opened Isaiah's eyes to see his own sin, He then showed the prophet the sins of God's people. Those who have been confronted by the depth of their own sinfulness, and experienced the liberty that heartfelt repentance brings, can be affective in calling the church to repentance. Self-righteousness strips us of the Spirit's anointing to reach the heart of a people. Only through brokenness can a person rightly expose the sins of others. Before Isaiah could proclaim to Israel their sin he had to first see his own.

The Spirit revealed Himself in breathtaking power in Scottish Presbyterian communion services in Kentucky, beginning in 1800. At these two or three day outdoor services deep repentance took place as people examined their ways prior to partaking of the Lord's Supper. Repentance began with the churched and then flowed to the unsaved. These meetings were environments conducive to revival. In 1801 the revival exploded at a communion service held in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. This inaugurated the Camp Meeting era. Presbyterians and Methodist came from great distances. Some accounts say that nearly 25,000 gathered in this wilderness setting. Over half were unconverted when they came. Most were gloriously saved when they left.

James B. Finley, who was converted at Cane Ridge and later became a Methodist circuit rider, gave an account of the Cane Ridge Revival. "The noise was like the roar of Niagara. The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by a storm. I counted seven ministers, all preaching at one time, some on stumps, others in wagons and one standing on a tree which had, in falling, lodged against another. . . . Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others were shouting most vociferously.

"While witnessing this scene, a peculiarly strange sensation such as I had never felt before came over me. My heart beat tumultuously, my knees trembled, my lips quivered and I felt as though I must fall to the ground. A strange supernatural power seemed to pervade the entire mass of mind there collected. . . I stepped up on a log where I could have a better view of the surging sea of humanity. The scene that then presented itself to my mind was indescribable. At one time I saw at least five hundred swept down in a moment as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them and then immediately followed shrieks and shouts that rent the very heavens" (Pratney, 125-126).

Only the Spirit of God can bring such deep remorse over sin. Neither the saved nor the unsaved escaped the convicting power of His presence. Such intense conviction is extremely difficult to understand unless you have experienced it for yourself.

7. The Sin Of The Nation Revealed

The next fact that the prophet came to understand was the terrifying position secular society was in due to their obstinate rebellion against the Almighty. Isaiah saw that the sins of the nation would incur God's just

and holy wrath if they did not turn from their wicked ways. The only hope for the nation was a divine encounter that would expose the sins of the people so they could receive the gift of repentance. When a nation comes face to face with the Living God the reality of their spiritual and moral poverty is exposed. Duncan Campbell relating to the Hebrides Awakening stated, "When God stepped down, suddenly men and women all over the parish were gripped with fear" (Campbell, When God). This is how the Spirit begins His transforming work of revival in a nation.

Similar to the days of Isaiah, America is suffering under obstinate rebellion against God. In this postmodern, post-Christian era secular society has replaced the Judeo-Christian morality with a relativistic philosophy void of God and void of absolutes. We have become a proud, self-indulgent nation in anarchy against the Creator. The non-Christian world does not comprehend this truth and many in the church are willfully ignorant of this nation's grave state of affairs.

The healing of nations comes through repentance. Before nations will change, people must change. Revival has produced some of the greatest social reforms known to man. For example, every social ill that produced the French Revolution was active in England in the early 1700's. God raised up John Wesley to hold back the flood of divine judgment looming over England by unleashing the transforming power of revival. Even secular historians give credit to the Methodist revivals for turning the reigns of a nation rushing towards catastrophe.

The poor English masses were gripped with a deep spirit of conviction as the Methodist Revival burst forth. "Wesley was a preacher of righteousness. He would exalt the holiness of God, the Law of God, the justice of God, the wisdom of His requirements, and the justice of His wrath. Then he would turn to sinners and tell them of the enormity of their crimes, their open rebellion, their treason, and their anarchy. The power of God would descend so mightily that it is reliably reported, on one occasion, when the people dispersed, there were eighteen hundred people lying on the ground, completely unconscious because they had a revelation of the holiness of God, and in the light of that, they had seen the enormity of their own sin" (Comfort, Hell's, 72).

As in the days of Wesley, judgment is hanging over America because of the enormity of our crimes against heaven. If the mercy of God is not released through revival then we are faced with the grim reality that justice will be executed. Only the Holy Spirit can transform a nation for eternal good.

8. A Bloody Stone

The Holy Spirit thoroughly convinced Isaiah of his sin and the sins of his people. The prophet knew that his only hope was mercy. How was mercy revealed? Through a hot bloody stone. That bloody coal came off the altar where lambs were sacrificed to atone for the sins of the people. After the prophet repented a seraph was sent to cleanse the preacher by touching his lips with a bloody stone. That stone represented Christ's sacrificial death on the cross as the Lamb of God. The only way for Isaiah to be made holy and useable was for the blood of Christ to cleanse him from all unrighteousness. That hot bloody stone burnt out the wickedness and set the prophet's heart on fire.

The glory of God always reveals the cross of Christ. The cross exposes the wickedness of our sin by manifesting the price for our redemption--a crucified Savior. Christ's death and resurrection offers sinners forgiveness from sin and victory over the bondage and love of sin. The Lord super-abounds with power to make His people holy if they want to be holy. "The cross of Christ, by the same mighty and decisive stroke with which it took the curse of sin away from us, also surely takes away the power and the love of sin"

(Hanna Whitall Smith, 16).

Holiness flows out of a cleansed heart that is surrendered to Christ. A passion for Jesus will always produce a passion for holiness. It is impossible for it to be otherwise. As Evan Roberts preached, "You would not be cold if you had come here by Calvary" (Duncan, 41).

9. Isaiah Was Called And Sent

After Isaiah was cleansed from his sin he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" The prophet quickly responded, "Here am I. Send me!" Then the Lord sent him saying, "Go and tell this people . . ." (Isa 6:8-9a).

Whoever the Lord cleanses He sends! Those who are passionate for God will be passionate to obey Him. The sad reality is that most western Christians lack a passion for Christ, which results in a lack of fervor for holiness, obedience and evangelism. One reason revival passes by most churches is because they do not want to be sent by God. Whenever we grow satisfied with our self-centered lives we will not want the Lord to upset our comfortable little world.

One of the primary purposes of revival is to awaken the church to reach the lost. The power of God is for the purposes of God. Christians that refuse to accept the call to rescue the unsaved are living in disobedience. Those who sit at the feet of Jesus will know His heart and abandon themselves to His cause. As William MacDonald told us, "Those who are constrained by the love of Christ will count no sacrifice too great to make for Him. They will do because of love to Him what they would never do for worldly gain. They will not count their lives dear unto themselves. They will spend and be spent if only men might not perish for want of the gospel" (MacDonald, 58-59).

SPIRITUAL REVOLUTIONARIES

When God steps down out of heaven, men and nations tremble. The Lord sent His Son to shake the kingdoms of men so He could raise a heavenly kingdom in their place. That's radical! Biblical Christianity is revolutionary because Jesus came into this world as a spiritual revolutionist. He taught His disciples the principles of overthrowing Satan's kingdom. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out and three thousand were saved. That's radical!

The church's first revival set in motion the revolutionary posture that was to define her spiritual life. The 1859 Irish Revival paints a wonderful picture of this point. "A poor man was converted at the beginning of the revival. Immediately, he became anxious for the conversion of the family with whom he resided, and his fellow-workmen at the mill. But they were an ungodly people. When they saw the change in the man they mocked, swore, sang impure songs, and did all they could to turn him from Christ. He saw that reproof was in vain, and resolved to pray for them. He prayed for a time until the answer came. Then suddenly one day the men in the mill were astonished at cries proceeding from their homes. The mill suspended business, and the men rushed to their houses to see what had caused the cries. They found their wives and daughters prostrated under strong conviction, crying to the Lord for mercy. The once despised convert was instantly appealed to for help, and led all the women to Christ.

"But the man's prayers were only partially answered. Some days later the mill had to again be stopped, but this time because of the men. While engaged in work the men were smitten down by the Spirit of God as they worked at their machines. Some of the strongest men and greatest scoffers fell powerless in a

moment under the mighty and mysterious influence of the work.

"Strong men were prostrated and crying for mercy. Converted wives and daughters bent over them with tears of joy, giving thanks to God for awakening their husbands and brothers. The poor man's prayers were answered. The seven souls in the house where he resided were all saved, and about nine-tenths of the workers at the mill have been converted" (Davis, 58-60, edited).

The revolutionary nature of revival is seen in how it seizes the hearts of the lost and radically reforms all who would come to Christ. Then radical converts go forth as radical agents of change.

There is no such thing as revolutionary Christians who have not first revolutionized their moral and spiritual life. Only holy men and women can become spiritual revolutionists. When we harbor sin in our lives we destroy the very things that make us godly revolutionaries: the holiness and presence of God.

This revolution, which Christ began, was one of holiness through intimate relationship with Him. It will never be a revolution through violence, hate and the works of the flesh because that would make Christ's kingdom no different than the world's rebellion. Our weapons do not consist of human might, nor natural wisdom and strength, but the Spirit of Almighty God.

The church militant is a holy church ablaze with the glory of God. Of such a church the world takes notice. A revived and holy church may be hated, as was the Lord; she may be reviled, rejected, beaten, killed or embraced; but she can never be ignored. It is time we accept the truth that if our Christianity is not revolutionary then it is not Biblical.

Jesus is building an army of saints that have been transformed by His holiness. They have stood in His presence, seen His glory, dealt with their sin and been cleansed by His blood. His holiness has permeated every fiber of their being so they strive with all their heart to fulfill the Lord's command to be holy because He is holy. Now the zeal of God consumes them. Then the call comes, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" What will we do with His call?

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