

Articles and Sermons :: My eyes have seen the King (Isaiah 6:1)

My eyes have seen the King (Isaiah 6:1), on: 2010/3/30 21:18

Have you had a vision of the Lord? Tozer writes.....

Through the years, I have quite often heard educated and intelligent persons say, "Let me tell you how I discovered God."

Whether these discoverers went on from there to a humble and adoring worship of God I cannot say. I do know, however, that all of us would be in great trouble and still far from God if He had not graciously and in love revealed Himself to us.

I am a little irritated or grieved at the continuing hope of so many people that they will be able to grasp God—understand God, commune with God—through their intellectual capacities. When will they realize that if they could possibly "discover" God with the intellect, they would be equal to God?

We would do well to lean toward the kind of discovery of God described by the prophet Isaiah:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple (6:1).

Now, that which Isaiah saw was wholly other than, and altogether different from, anything he had ever seen before. Up to this point in his life, Isaiah had become familiar with the good things God had created. But he had never been introduced to the presence of the Uncreated.

To Isaiah, then, the violent contrast between that which is God and that which is not God was such that his very language suffered under the effort to express it.

Significantly, God was revealing Himself to man. Isaiah could have tried for a million years to reach God by means of his intellect without any chance of succeeding. All of the accumulated brainpower in the whole world could not reach God.

But the living God, in the space of a short second of time, can reveal Himself to the willing spirit of a man. It is only then that an Isaiah, or any other man or woman, can say with humility but with assurance, "I know Him."

Unlike men, God never acts without purpose. Here God was revealing Himself to Isaiah for eternal purposes. Isaiah has tried to give us a true record, but what actually happened is greater than what Isaiah wrote by as much as God is greater than the human mind. Isaiah confesses that he had never before seen the Lord sitting upon a throne.

Modern critics of this record by Isaiah warn us of the danger of anthropomorphism—the attempt to bestow upon God certain human attributes.

I have never been afraid of big words. Let them call it what they will, I still believe that God sits upon a throne, invested with self-bestowed sovereignty. I believe, too, that God sits upon a throne determining all events, finally, according to the purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Now, because we are dealing with worship, let us consider the joys and delights of the heavenly creatures, the seraphim, around the throne of God. This is Isaiah's record:

Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (6:2-3).

We know very little about these created beings, but I am impressed by their attitude of exalted worship. They are close to the throne and they burn with rapturous love for the Godhead. They were engrossed in their antiphonal chants, "Holy, holy, holy!"

I have often wondered why the rabbis and saints and hymnists of those olden times did not come to the knowledge of the Trinity just from the seraphims' praise, "Holy, holy, holy." I am a Trinitarian—I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, begotten of Him before all ages. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified.

This is a very moving scene—the seraphim worshiping God. The more I read my Bible the more I believe in the Triune God.

In Isaiah's vision the seraphim were chanting their praises to the Trinity 800 years before Mary cried with joy and her Baby wailed in Bethlehem's manger, when the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son, came to earth to dwell among us. The key words then and the keynote still of our worship must be "Holy, holy, holy!"

I am finding that many Christians are really not comfortable with the holy attributes of God. In such cases I am forced to wonder about the quality of the worship they try to offer to Him.

The word "holy" is more than an adjective saying that God is a holy God—it is an ecstatic ascription of glory to the Triune God. I am not sure that we really know what it means, but I think we should attempt a definition.

Complete moral purity can only describe God. Everything that appears to be good among men and women must be discounted, for we are human. Not one of us is morally pure. Abraham, David and Elijah; Moses, Peter and Paul—all were good men. They were included in God's fellowship. But each had his human flaws and weaknesses as members of Adam's race. Each had to find the place of humble repentance. Because God knows our hearts and our intentions, He is able to restore His sincere and believing children who are in the faith.

Much of our problem in continuing fellowship with a holy God is that many Christians repent only for what they do, rather than for what they are.

It should help us to be concerned about the quality of our worship when we consider that Isaiah's reaction was a feeling of absolute profaneness in the presence of the moral purity of the divine Being. Consider that Isaiah was a commendable young man—cultured, religious and a cousin of the king. He would have made a good deacon in any church. Today he would be asked to serve on one of our mission boards.

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 had 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."

The definition of "Holy, holy" must certainly have room for "mystery" if, in our attempts to worship, we are to have an effective appreciation of our God.

There are leaders in various Christian circles who know so much about the things of God that they will offer to answer every question you may have.

We can hope to answer questions helpfully as far as we can. But there is a sense of divine mystery running throughout all of the kingdom of God—far beyond the mystery that scientists discover running throughout the kingdom of nature.

There are those who pretend to know everything about God—who pretend they can explain everything about God, about His creation, about His thoughts and about His judgments. They have joined the ranks of the evangelical rationalists. They end up taking the mystery out of life and the mystery out of worship. When they have done that, they have taken God out as well.

The kind of "know-it-all" attitude about God that we see in some teachers today leaves them in a very difficult position. They must roundly criticize and condemn any other man taking any position slightly different from theirs.

Our cleverness and glibness and fluency may well betray our lack of that divine awe upon our spirits, silent and wonderful, that breathes a whisper, "Oh, Lord God, Thou knowest."

In Isaiah 6 we see a clear portrayal of what happens to a person in the mystery of the Presence. Isaiah, overpowered within his own being, can only confess humbly, "I am a man of unclean lips!"

I remind you that Isaiah recognized the "strangeness"—something of the mystery of the Person of God. In that Presence, Isaiah found no place for joking or for clever cynicism or for human familiarity. He found a strangeness in God, that is, a presence unknown to the sinful and worldly and self-sufficient human.

A person who has sensed what Isaiah sensed will never be able to joke about "the Man upstairs" or the "Someone up there who likes me."

One of the movie actresses who still prowled around the nightclubs after her supposed conversion to Christ was quoted as telling someone, "You ought to know God. You know, God is just a livin' doll!" I read where another man said, "God is a good fellow."

I confess that when I hear or read these things I feel a great pain within. My brother or sister, there is something about our God that is different, that is beyond us, that is above us—transcendent. We must be humbly willing to throw our hearts open and to plead, "God, shine Thyself into my understanding for I will never find Thee otherwise."

The mystery, the strangeness is in God. Our Lord does not expect us to behave like zombies when we become Christian

ns. But He does expect that we will have our soul open to the mystery that is God. I think it is proper for us to say that a genuine Christian should be a walking mystery because he surely is a walking miracle. Through the leading and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is involved in a daily life and habit that cannot be explained. A Christian should have upon him an element that is beyond psychology—beyond all natural laws and into spiritual laws. God is a consuming fire. We are told that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Do you recall the first chapter of Ezekiel? The dejected prophet saw heaven opened. He was given a vision of God. And he then witnessed four-faced creatures out of the fire.

I think in our witness and ministries, we Christians should be men and women out of the fire. Because our God is holy, He is actively hostile to sin. God can only burn on and on against sin forever. In another passage Isaiah asked, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (33:14).

Isaiah was not thinking about those who would be separated from God. He was thinking of a company who would live for God and dwell with God. He answers his own question: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly;... he shall dwell on high" (33:15-16).

The Salvation Army has always had as its slogan "Blood and Fire." I am for that in the things of God. We know of cleansing by the blood of Christ. The references to God's workings often have to do with a holy flame. John the Baptist pointed to Christ's coming and said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance:... he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

When Isaiah cried out, "I am undone!" it was a cry of pain. It was the revealing cry of conscious uncleanness. He was experiencing the undoneness of the creature set over against the holiness of the Creator.

What should happen in genuine conversion? What should a man or woman feel in the transaction of the new birth?

There ought to be that real and genuine cry of pain. That is why I do not like the kind of evangelism that tries to invite people into the fellowship of God by signing a card.

There should be a birth from above and within. There should be the terror of seeing ourselves in violent contrast to the holy, holy, holy God. Unless we come into this place of conviction and pain, I am not sure how deep and real our repentance will ever be.

Today, it is not a question of whether we have Isaiah's cleanness, but a question of whether we have his awareness. He was unclean and, thank God, he became aware of it. But the world today is unclean and seems to be almost totally unaware of it.

Uncleanness with unawareness will have terrible consequences. That is what is wrong with the Christian church and with our Protestantism. Our problem is the depravity still found within the circle of the just, among those called to be saints, among those who claim to be great souls.

We like Isaiah's vision and awareness. But we do not like to think of the live coal out of the fire being placed on the prophet's lips.

Purification by blood and by fire. Isaiah's lips, symbolic of all his nature, were purified by fire. God could then say to him, "Thine iniquity is taken away" (6:7).

That is how the amazed and pained Isaiah could genuinely come to a sense of restored moral innocence. That is how he instantly found that he was ready for worship and that he was also ready and anxious for service in the will of God.

With each of us, if we are to have that assurance of forgiveness and restored moral innocence, the fire of God's grace must touch us. It is only through the depths of the forgiving love of God that men and women can be so restored and made ready to serve Him.

In the same vein, is there any other way in which we, the creatures of God, can become prepared and ready to worship Him?

I can only remind you of our great needs in this terrible day when men and women are trying their best to cut God down to their size. Many also believe that it is possible to gain control of the sovereign God and to think Him down to a plane where they can use Him as they want to.

Even in our Christian circles we are prone to depend upon techniques and methods in the work that Christ has given us to do. Without a complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit we can only fail. If we have been misled to believe that we can do Christ's work ourselves, it will never be done.

The man whom God will use must be undone. He must be a man who has seen the King in His beauty.

Let us never take anything for granted about ourselves, my brother or sister.

Do you know who gives me the most trouble? Do you know who I pray for the most in my pastoral work? Just myself. I do not say it to appear to be humble, for I have preached all my lifetime to people who are better than I. I tell you again that God has saved us to be worshipers. May God show us a vision of ourselves that will disvalue us to the point of total devaluation. From there He can raise us up to worship Him and to praise Him and to witness.

Â—Whatever Happened to Worship?

Re: My eyes have seen the King (Isaiah 6:1) - posted by live4jc, on: 2010/3/31 0:01

Thanks for sharing that, Brother. That was a real blessing :)

In Jesus,
John

Re: , on: 2010/3/31 0:50

I think that it is the cry of this generation, its the desperate need of the age, its the absolute necessity of the hour. Brother David Ford shared on our conference call tonight, the worship leader of many of sermonidex revival conferences. His Scripture was.....

Jer 18:2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

Jer 18:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

Jer 18:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Jer 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Jer 18:6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

My question to the Lord's children, the Lord's Church, is, will you arise and go down to the Potters house? Will you come to the Father and place yourself in His hand? Will you allow yourself to be marred, to be ruined for this world? Can you abandon yourself to His wheel and allow Him to create in you what He will? For He will not force you, He will not make you, but He will stand at the door of your heart and knock. Will you come to Him, with the fullness of your life, holding nothing back and allow Him to mar you, to ruin you? Will you step up to the door and open up your heart and allow the King of Glory to come in in all of His fullness?

Will you get up from the pig sty of lukewarmness and arise from the mire of entanglements and make your way back to the Father's house? Here is what I know, for those who heed the cry, who heed the command to arise, who harken to the knocking of the door, you will run head onto into the Father of lights for He will see His children a far way off and He will run to them and rejoice to see His children have come back to Him. Oh prodigal church will you arise and go to the Father's house, the Potters house? He is calling to you!brother Frank

Re: , on: 2010/3/31 10:43

Amen John, I am glad that you were blessed.....Frank