

# Seeing God Clearly

## *Isaiah 6:1-13*

I am convinced that the single most important part of your life and mine is how we see God. Two sociologists from Baylor University surveyed almost 4000 adults in America and asked them about their views on God. They discovered that 9-out-of-10 Americans believe in God, but the way they picture God determines their attitudes on everything from economics to justice, social morality, war, natural disasters, science, politics and love.

Which raises a question, **“How do you view God?”** When I talk to people and I listen to people I find out there are all kinds of god’s out there that we believe in. Here are just a few.

There is the **“mean old man god”** who is angry, not only hates sin, but doesn’t care for sinners and he is always trying to catch us doing something wrong so he can whip us or beat us and if he ever invites you to a barbeque be careful because you are the one that will be on the grill!

Then there is the **“good ole boy”** god. He is my buddy. He is my homeboy. He is always cool and loves to just chill out and hang out. He is the buddy god.

Then some believe in the **“bellhop”** god. God has only one job and only one concern and that is to give me what I want, when I want it and the way I want it. I am not here to serve Him; He is here to serve me. When things are right we are tight, but when things are not we are not.

Then there is the **“whatever”** god. He has made us all the way we are. So there is really no such thing as right or wrong. If it feels good to you do it. In fact, He is not just all that concerned about what is going on down here. He just looks at this world and says “Whatever.”

What is your picture of God? An elementary school teacher was giving a drawing class to her first graders and at the back of the classroom a little girl, who normally doesn’t pay a lot of attention was drawing like mad. For more than 20 minutes she sat with her arms curled around her paper totally absorbed in this picture she was drawing. The teacher found this fascinating. She walked over to the girl and said, “What are you drawing?” Without even looking up the girl said, “I’m drawing a picture of God.” The teacher said, “Nobody knows what God looks like.” The girl said, “They will when I am finished.”

In truth, there is only one picture of God that really matters and that is His picture. What you and I think of God is really irrelevant and unimportant. What God thinks of God is what matters. We are going to study a passage of scripture in just a moment that tells us unequivocally what our picture of God should be.

There is one thing true about our relationship with God that is true about our relationship with each other and that is this – relationship is based on reality.

How many times have marriages gone south, because two people got married in haste and all of a sudden realized the person they thought they were marrying was not the person they married. There are so many people that don’t have a relationship with God, because the God they have a relationship with is not really God. God wants to have a personal, eternal relationship with you.

I know that because of one simple statement that Jesus made. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray He gives them what we call “The Lord’s Prayer” and He begins with a revolutionary thought that knocked them off their feet. He said that you begin by calling God, **“Our Father.”** God is not just the God who

parts seas, sends plagues, writes commandments on tablets and destroys nations. He is a God who wants to relate to you as a Father to a child.

This series is so vitally important and so relevant to you, because the single most important thing about you is not how much money you make, not what you look like, not how popular you are or how prosperous you are. The most important thing about you is how you see God.

The reason is simple. If your view of God is wrong then your view of you is wrong. Your view of life is wrong. Your view of success is wrong. Your view of what is really important is wrong.

**Key Take Away: The most important thing in life is to have a real relationship with the real God.** Remember, what is important is not just how you see God, but how God sees God. We are going to find out in an incident that took place, in the life of a man, named Isaiah, over 2500 years ago the God we must relate to. It does no good to get up close and personal with a God who is not real.

Before we can begin to share with you how you can relate to God we have to make sure we are relating to the right God and the real God. [Turn to **Isaiah 6**] Seeing God Clearly means...

## I. I Will See God For Who He Really Is

Isaiah begins by telling us the exact year that this incident took place in his life.

***“In the year that King Uzziah died.” (Isaiah 6:1, ESV)***

Was that an important year? It was if you were King Uzziah! But it was even more important to Isaiah, because something happened that so changed Isaiah’s life that he could point to the exact date, the exact hour, and the exact minute to when it happened and what had happened. You have to understand the background of the story to see why it was such a big deal.

One of the kings who reigned during the ministry of Isaiah was a man named Uzziah. He was one of the more successful kings of Judah. He had strengthened the defense of Jerusalem, turning it into a fortified city that was able to fight off her enemies. He had led the nation to economic prosperity. God had favored the land with peace, prosperity, and security, but then Uzziah died.

In this culture when the king died your country was at its most vulnerable. This is when enemies would attack and a vicious enemy named Assyria was on the horizon with designs to conquer Judah and take the people into captivity. A giant cloud of fear had blocked out the sunshine of joy and the people didn’t know where to turn or who to turn to and that is when this happened.

***“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne...” (Isaiah 6:1, ESV)***

Isaiah saw something for the first time that no one else in history had ever seen. He saw the creator God of the universe, the King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords sitting, not on an earthly throne, but on an eternal throne. This is the King that he saw.

***“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.” (Isaiah 6:1, ESV)***

There are two kings in **verse 1**. A king who has died and a King who lives, a human king and a divine King, a mortal king and an immortal King. What God is reminding Isaiah of is this – there is only One king that is

indispensable and that is not the one who can die, but the One who can't. The most important king in Isaiah's life was not the one who was being buried, but the One who can never be.

What Isaiah saw then is what God wants you to see now. These were troubled days for Isaiah and the nation of Judah. A good king had died and Judah is facing invasion from an Assyrian army that is far more powerful than they are. When things are looking down that is when we need to look up. When Isaiah saw the real God he saw clearly what we need to see today and that is God is on the throne. His hand is on the throttle. He is in complete control.

There is a great word here for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. What matters most is not who is in the White House, but who is on the throne. We may face a pandemic, terrorist attacks, culture dissipation, a sinking economy, a mountain of debt, increasing persecution, spiritual hostility, and in short, trials, troubles, and tribulation, but in the midst of it all there is a sovereign God on the throne. When terrorists strike, when doctors say, "You have cancer", when the boss says, "You're fired", there is a God who is high and lifted up who is in complete control and knows exactly what He is doing.

The story continues -

***"Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:2-3, ESV)***

I am not exaggerating when I tell you that is the single most important picture of God you will find in all of the Old Testament, because now we learn what it is that really makes God – God. These angelic creatures called "seraphim" cry out continuously,

***"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:3, ESV)***

No man upstairs here. No good 'ole boy god here. No god is my homeboy here. This is a God who is Holy.

Seven out of every twelve references to the name of God in the Old Testament refers to God as "holy." That adjective is used for God more often than all of the other adjectives in the Old Testament put together. The chief attribute of God is not mercy, grace, love, compassion, power or knowledge. The chief attribute of God is holiness.

The central meaning of the Hebrew word for ***"holiness"*** is "separate" or "separateness." It comes from a Semitic root that means "to cut" like cutting an object in half so you can separate the two pieces. It refers to something that is completely and totally separate from everything else and everyone else.

In other words, there is a God who is not just a cut above us, but He is an eternal cut above us. He is a God that is so far different and so far distinct from every creature that the only way He can be described is "holy." He is one of a kind. He cannot be compared with anyone else or anything else, because there is no one and nothing else like Him.

There is no one like this God. He alone is holy. Therefore He is to be seen differently, related to differently and treat differently than anyone else and anything else.

Do you know why the word ***"holy"*** is repeated three times? It is not because God is deaf. In Hebrew poetry, repetition is the method you use to emphasize something. When we want to emphasize something we underline it, italicize it, put it bold print or put an exclamation point after it. The Jewish people in order to

emphasize something used the method of repetition. When something was mentioned three times it was to elevate it to the greatest degree and give it the greatest importance.

Only once in the entire Bible is any characteristic of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a character trait of God mentioned three times in succession and that trait is not love, mercy, grace, or justice; it is holiness. If you do not see God primarily as a God who is holy you have the wrong view of God and remember – How I see God determines how I relate to God.

That is why we are told in this verse, ***“The whole earth is full of His glory.” (Isaiah 6:3, ESV)***

Think about that. His glory doesn't just fill the temple. It fills the entire earth! There is nothing more disgusting to God or dishonoring to God than trying to put God into your little box or my little box. When it comes to God not only do you have to think outside the box, but you can't even have a box!

To see God clearly, I need to see God the way He really is. Now here is a question, “How do you know when you really have seen God the way God really is?” Here is how.

## **II. I Will See Me The Way I Really Am**

As soon as Isaiah sees the real God notice his reaction.

***“And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’” (Isaiah 6:4-5, ESV)***

When Isaiah looked through the window and saw a God on His throne and all of His holiness that window became a mirror that showed a man and all of his sinfulness. That is what happens when you see the real God. You see the real you. You will never see yourself for what you really are until you see God for who He really is.

Can I tell you what I have discovered in my own spiritual pilgrimage? The more I know of God the less I think of me. Most of us live in two extremes. We are either full of God and empty of ourselves or we are full of ourselves and empty of God. When Isaiah saw who he really was he didn't like the picture. He said, ***“I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.” (Isaiah 6:5, TNIV)***

The word ***“ruined”*** means ***“to come unraveled.”***

It is like the little 5 year old boy who went down to Florida for the first time and he got sunburned. A few days later his skin started peeling off. He ran to his bedroom to his mother and said, “Mommy look at me. I'm 5 years old and coming apart already!”

When Isaiah saw God for who He was and then saw himself for who he was he literally said, “I'm coming apart.” All of my so-called goodness, integrity, and decency is nothing compared to God's holiness. When God is high and lifted up we will be low and taken down.

Notice what happens next. When we get honest in our relationship to God He gets merciful in His relationship to us.

***“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’” (Isaiah 6:6-7, ESV)***

What you see here is a perfect illustration of that truth, “God loves a sinner, but hates the sin.” What Isaiah hates in himself God hates even more, but God’s love for the sinner is greater than His hatred for the sin. Isaiah is cleansed and Isaiah is forgiven.

The one thing that has to happen for you and me to have a relationship with this God is we have to get real. We have to see Him for who He really is and we have to see us for who we really are. Then, when that happens this will happen.

### **III. I Will See Others The Way They Really Are**

Notice what happens in **verse 8**. ***“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me.’ (Isaiah 6:8, ESV)***

Isaiah is now so close to God he can ease-drop in on a conference call that is taking place between the Trinity. It is obvious the Lord wasn’t just talking to Himself. He said,

***“Who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8, ESV)***

Once you see God for who He really is you will want to surrender everything you are to everything He is. Isaiah responds the way we all should, ***“Here am I! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:8, ESV)***

That is so refreshing because most people when God says, ***“Whom should I send? Who will go for Us?”*** They don’t say, “Here am I. Send me.” They say, “There he is. Send him.”

The measure of the depth of your relationship to God is surrender, because the deeper your relationship the greater your surrender. Here is how you will know that you are hitting on all 8 cylinders in your relationship with God. It doesn’t matter what God asks you to do you will do it even if it means failure or death.

When you see God the way He really is and the way you really are you will see others the way they really are which is in need of the same relationship with God that you now have. You say you want them to have the relationship with God that you have? Then you will do everything in your power to make it happen even when you know that for most people it won’t, because notice what else He says to Isaiah.

***“And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.” Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” Then I said, ‘How long, O Lord?’ And he said: ‘Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste.’ (Isaiah 6:9-11, ESV)***

Now do you get the picture of what God is telling Isaiah to do? He is telling Him to go talk to people when they won’t listen. Go preach when they won’t respond. Go knock on doors even when they will be slammed in your face.

Why would Isaiah agree to take the job? Why would Isaiah agree to do what God told him to do even though he knew the message would fall on deaf ears and his ministry, at least from a human viewpoint would be a failure, because Isaiah finally understands that in our relationship with God we are not called to be fruitful. We are called to be faithful. Faithfulness is our business. Fruitfulness is God’s business.

What does all of this mean? If the real me is to be rightly related to the real God then because that God is holy I must be holy too, which is exactly what one of the twelve disciples wrote 800 years later.

***“But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16, ESV)***

Do you know what that means? When you see God for who He is and you see God for who you are you will take your life and say, “Here I am. Send me.” You will take your family and say, “Here they are. Use them.” You will take your money and say, “Here it is. Take it and use it for Your glory and Your honor.”

This God is so holy He sent His son, Jesus Christ, to die for the one thing that keeps us from being holy and being rightly related to the One who is holy and that is sin. He raised that Jesus from the dead to prove that through Him we can have a real relationship with the real God that will last for all eternity.