

Holy God With Us in Christ (Isaiah 6-8)

Please take the holy Word of our holy God and turn to Isaiah chapter 6. We started a series last week on Christ in Isaiah in each section of Isaiah, today we'll look at chapters 6-8. Many of us have heard sermons before on Isa 6, but maybe not with the context of chapters 7-8. God's holiness we've sung and seen from this familiar chapter. What's not as familiar is how it shows us Christ. Let's look afresh at this life-transforming vision for Isaiah and us

*¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² 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. ³ And one called to another and said: "**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ 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!**" ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." 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." ⁹ And he said, "Go, and say to this people: " 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ 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, ¹² and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. ¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." **The holy seed is its stump.** [now look at Isa **7:14**] **Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel** [God with us]*

Title of today's message: Holy God With Us: Jesus in Isaiah Series, Pt 2. If we study chapter 6 without chapter 7 we miss a crucial. If we study the prophecy of Isa 7:14 without keeping in mind what's before it, we miss the great picture of our need in chap 6 in light of God's holiness and how astonishing it is for this holy, holy, holy God to be with us unholy people.

Holy means ‘utterly set apart, separate from sin, pure unique, clean’ (unlike us). A son born of man and woman can’t fulfill this. God gave a sign (a miraculous wonder) that a son would be born of God through a virgin, a holy child whose name would mean God with us, who’d *be* God with us.

Undeified by man’s impure seed, Immanuel would be born of a pure virgin. The end of Isa 6, v. 13 mentions a *holy seed*. That’s the same word from the first prophecy of Christ ever given in Gen 3:15 ‘*the woman...and her seed.*’ Not the man’s, though biologically his seed goes into woman, it’s a hint of an unusual son, a seed of woman rather than man (made clearer in Isaiah). This would be the way holy God with man can dwell, Jesus our Immanuel. Isa 7:14 promises as we sing “yon’ virgin mother and child, a **holy infant**”

In our study through Isaiah we’ll journey through familiar scriptures and songs of Immanuel’s coming. I like that we’re doing this before December. I hope studying these familiar prophecies outside of our Christmas cultural context and seeing these truths in ancient Israel’s context will be refreshing. In God’s providence and timing our mission giving focus this month we call ‘Christmas in October,’ a love offering for our missionaries before we get to that season to help them. Our closing song today and this October includes Christmas music. We’ll also be giving attention to Christmas prophecies in Isaiah, before we get to that season to help us see and sing. I can get caught up in commercialism and traditionalism and miss rich words like we’ll sing:

O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appears.

Look back at Isa 5:13, the context before Immanuel’s promised 1st coming.
5:13 *Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst* [NKJV uses word ‘captive’ for Israel]. Isaiah will talk about Israel’s mourning and loneliness and a coming day Israel will be ransomed, but first, many dark cloudy days. Look at v. 30, middle of verse: ‘...if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress and the light is darkened by its clouds’ [or end of Isa 8 *gloom*]. A few verses later Isaiah talks about the ‘*dark...shadow of death*’ but it says Israel will ‘*rejoice before You...For unto us a Child is born...a son is given*’ (NKJV, that’s chapter 9 and it gives other names in addition to Immanuel).

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.
O come Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan’s tyranny...
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; Fill the whole world with heaven’s peace

Isa 9 calls the virgin-born Immanuel ‘*the Prince of Peace*’ and chapter 11 in some versions call Him the ‘*Rod from...Jesse*’ (father of King David). Isa 11 describes a day war will cease as Immanuel comes again, the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Prince of Peace. We’ll study Isa 9-11 next week but that Christmas hymn is a good commentary. Isaiah enriches how we sing and think of both Advents. I hope it encourages us to see how much chapter 6 is also about Immanuel, as it points us to our need of Him, it pictures Him, and it even prophesies Him. Last week we saw the beauty of Christ in chapter 4, today we’ll see His holiness in chapters 6-8, so we might better worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. This vision should also motivate us to be sent by Him, to serve and minister despite difficulty.

Isa 6:1 was a difficult time for Israel in the year King Uzziah died. Not only was he one of the top 3 or 4 kings in their history spiritually till the last part of his reign, he brought 5+ decades of prosperity, stability, and security. But he died suffering the result of a fall into sin, and the 2 men after him on the throne of Judah were very unholy. In that time of great uncertainty and fear, Isaiah sees the throne of heaven and a seated sovereign holy King of kings. In this downcast low time as a nation, he sees *the Lord...high and lifted up*.

Behold your God, seated on His throne, behold your King

Isaiah identifies this high and lifted up King as Jesus the Messiah in Isa 52. Turn to chapter 52 and I want you to see I’m not reading the NT into Isa 6. Isaiah himself uses the same Hebrew phrase the next time to describe Jesus. God the Father says in Isa 52:13 ‘*Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be **high and lifted up** [how Isa 6 described the One on the throne], and shall be exalted.*’ But the high lifted up One in the next verse became a man Astonishingly he’s marred by suffering. In v. 15 He sprinkles many, a word for priests sprinkling with blood. The high and lifted up Lord on the throne in chapter 6 would be born, chapter 7 says as Immanuel, God with us, and in chapter 52-53 He’s the sacrifice, shedding His blood for our sin. So the earthly King of Judah died in Isa 6 but King Jesus is alive and on the throne. We need this vision of an enthroned Christ ruling the earth full of His glory.

*We need to behold our King and ‘behold the wondrous mystery...
He the theme of heaven’s praises robed in frail humanity’*

Isa 52:7 ties this to the *good news*. v. 10 even uses a Hebrew word for Jesus. End of v. 10: *...all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation [the Hebrew word is Yeshua, OT form of NT word Jesus] of our God*. The name *Yeshua* is what Hebrew-speakers call Jesus to this day, but way back in Isaiah’s day the *Lord high lifted up* in chap 6 is connected to the Messiah in chap 52.

Astonishingly the seated Sovereign became a suffering Servant. A holy God left His throne and heavenly robe that filled the temple with glory and He laid it aside to live for unholy men in earthly rags, Immanuel, God with us.

Back in chapter 6, v. 3, seraphim cry out something else that points to Jesus: *'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts...'* and then at the end of v. 5 we read *'my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!'* (cf. Ps 24:10?). Isaiah later uses that phrase *'the King'* for Jesus-Messiah's reign: *'Behold, a king will reign in righteousness...he will be the stability of your times, abundance of Yeshua...your eyes will behold **the king** in his beauty'* (32:1, 33:6, 17). God the Father told Moses: *'man shall not see me and live'* (Ex 33:20), so Isaiah must have seen God the Son, the God-with-us we can see and live (Jn 1:18). *LORD of hosts=Lord Sabaoth*. I think Luther got it right in his classic hymn:

*On our side, the Man of God's own choosing...ask who that may be? Christ Jesus
It is He. **Lord Sabaoth** His name, from age to age the same. And He must win...*

Notice the title in Isa 6:3 was used a few verses earlier interchangeably with another title. Isa 5:24 says at the end of v. 24:... *they have rejected the law of **the LORD of hosts**, and have despised the word of **the Holy One** of Israel.* That's poetic parallelism saying the same phrase 2 ways. The Lord of hosts/Sabaoth, the King is the same as *'the Holy One.'* That was already a title for Messiah 200+ years before Isaiah in Ps 16 where David prophesied Messiah as God's *Holy One* who would not be abandoned to the grave or see decay.

In Jn 6 Peter told Jesus: *we have believed, and have come to know, that **you are the Holy One** of God* (v. 69). Demons said *'Jesus...I know who you are, the **Holy One** of God'* (Mk 1:25). Even the demons believe and they tremble and beg Jesus not to destroy them, they say 'woe is us' as unclean demons. Gabriel tells the virgin Mary *'behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son [Isa 7]...The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you...that **Holy One** who is to be born will be called the Son of God'* (Lk 1:31, 35 NKJV). The Holy One of Isa 6 becomes the virgin-born holy God with us in Isa 7.

Rejoice! Rejoice if Immanuel has come to you!

Some say Isa 7:14 is a *maiden* in Isaiah's day? They argue the Hebrew term focuses on a single state not a sexual state. Since v. 10-11 offers God's sign to King Ahaz, some say v. 14 must be a sign he saw in his lifetime, but then has double fulfillment, or is a type or pattern repeated in the NT in a maiden named Mary. I think v. 14-15 has single fulfillment in Jesus born of a virgin

1. The Hebrew isn't as precise as Greek but in 200 BC devout Jewish Greek scholars translated Isa 7:14 using Greek *parthenos* which can only mean virgin and it shows how ancient Jews understood v. 14 long before NT.¹
2. When Ahaz refuses God's command in v. 12, the language actually shifts in v. 13 away from the sinful king: '*Hear then, O house of David!*' God is talking to David's house, not Ahaz. In v. 14 the pronoun is plural, God '*will give you a sign*' is plural, *you all*, not singular, *you*=David's family as a royal line that would continue till records were destroyed in 70 A.D.
3. Context of v. 11 is a supernatural prophetic sign, not a natural pregnancy. v. 14 calls attention to an extraordinary miraculous sign, not an ordinary son: '*...a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive...*' E.J. Young writes the Hebrew word *behold* is used in the OT 'to announce a birth of unusual importance and significance ... in Ugarit it had been used to announce the birth of gods [El] ... On Isaiah's lips, however, this formula is lifted from its ancient pagan context and made to introduce the announcement of the birth of the only One who is truly God [*El* with us, Hebrew *Emanu El*].'² Name and language similarity to 9:6 (*Mighty God*, same root word for God as 7:14) suggests it's the same child to be born, the son given with the government on his shoulder, a King whose kingdom would never end
4. The context of 7:14-15 points to their future. The prophecy of v. 14 is a sign to David's house (family or descendants) about a future son, and v. 15 gives a hint that the timeline would be after Assyria conquered Judah decades in the future. It says Immanuel will eat curd and honey as a boy. In v. 22 that's the diet of a later remnant after Assyria desolates them, the end of v. 22 says '*...he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.*' i.e., he'll be part of a future remnant after exile (v. 16 is confusing but may just mean before Jesus grows up, the land of the kings Ahaz dreaded will be laid waste, Assyria and Northern Israel).³ That happened after Isaiah's son grew up but before Mary's son grew up.

Mt 1 gives the family tree of the house of David with Uzziah and Ahaz and it counts the generations '*from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ* [Messiah].' Then a betrothed virgin Mary and Joseph, descendants of the house of David, it says '*...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit...All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us"*' (NIV). God said it, that settles it, period. So what did Isaiah want us to take away?

#1. Rejoice in Immanuel's coming. In Isa 7 they were waiting, in Isa 25:9 they're celebrating in the future with us: *'It will be said on that day...we have waited for him, that he might save us...let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation [Yeshua, cf. Lk 2:10].'* Rejoice, Immanuel has come to Israel, you

#2. Honor and fear His holiness. Look at 8:13: *But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* We need to honor as holy the Lord of hosts. There should be holy fear for Him like Peter in the boat (I'm a sinful man) or John on the isle of Patmos. It isn't just reverential respect, there's fear *and trembling*. Demons tremble, and even the holy angels in Isa 6 cover their faces in the Lord's presence. In Rev 15 they sing the song of the Lamb, that's Christ: *O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. Worship 'with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire'* Heb 12. Recommended reading on your note sheet: Holiness of God, by R.C. Sproul

That starts with how we pray, hallowing God's name, honoring it as holy. It includes how we talk, whether we're complaining or thanking: Ps 30:4 *'give thanks to his holy name.'* It includes what I think or feel inwardly and what I choose to remember and set my mind on: Ps 103: *'O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...'* It starts in hearts: *'in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always...prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you ...a reason for the hope that is in you...with gentleness and respect'* 1 Pet 3

#3. Make Christ your holy place. Isa 8:14 *And he [Lord of hosts in v. 13, chap 6 vision] will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken...* Again the Lord of hosts Isaiah saw is Jesus, as He quotes this in Lk 20:18 applying it to Himself as the rock and stone they fell on and were broken.

To say Jesus would become a sanctuary in the context of Jerusalem makes me think of Christ's word that their temple sanctuary would come down but His body would replace it as the place of worship. He's the holy presence of God now and if we come to Him and through Him we won't stumble or fall. Like Israel, 1 Pet 2 says the NT church is *'being built up a spiritual house ...through Jesus Christ...to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient... "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense" (NKJV)*

#4. Behold your King and be changed. Let's end where we began in Isa 6 where his eyes had seen the King and it changed him. Do you see Christ as precious? If you believe and behold His holy glory, you'll be changed by it. But if you don't look in faith, you'll stumble and fall, His word will offend. John's gospel also quotes the end of Isa 6 to prove the glory of the Lord that filled the temple in Isaiah's vision was the glorious Christ. Quoting Isa 6, v. 10, Jn 12:40 says '*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.* (NIV). Other translations have '*his glory*' but the next verse is clear the *his/him* is Jesus who Isaiah saw in Isa 6

Isa 6:9-10 is also quoted by Jesus in Mt 13 as He explains why He taught in parables that apostate Israelites couldn't hear or see because they wouldn't. Jesus said: *Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive."* [then Jesus puts the responsibility on them, not a disability they couldn't help but a dullness of heart, He says] *with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see ...* So it's not like a physical handicap, it's a spiritual holding shut their eyes to not see

The sobering reality is judicial blindness can follow, or hardness as Pharaoh hardened his heart and then God hardened his heart. Today if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart. Jesus said in that same context '*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*' Listen, God is holy, holy, holy and you are not. Confess that with Isaiah and confess with Job 'God is God and I am not.' In Job's case he said '*I put my hand over my mouth.*' In Isaiah's case he said '*I'm a man of unclean lips... Woe is me!*' (woe means sure judgment is due). Isaiah saw God and saw himself truly, and was shattered. He saw the King, and all the King's horses and men couldn't put Isaiah back together again.

But despite man's fall in sin, the King can restore us, as He says in this text. If we turn from our sin, He'll heal us. Isaiah calls himself ruined, wrecked, but the King puts him back together again by this picture of the gospel in v. 6: the Lord offers a coal from His altar, the place of sacrifice. His holiness is a consuming fire, and in this chapter even a perfect angel has to use tongs to carry it. Seraphim means fiery ones but even they find God's fiery coals too hot to handle with fiery hands. Notice in v. 7 this messenger takes this burning blazing symbol of His holy clean presence to touch the very unholy part of Isaiah he mentioned, his unclean lips (implying purging, purifying).

The message is ‘*your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for...*’ That’s a preview of Isa 53, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus taking judgment due us. ‘*Woe is me*’ means Isaiah expected his life to be taken away but his guilt is taken away! Instead of annihilation for his sin he receives atonement for sin. In light of holiness, Isaiah confesses his uncleanness, and finds forgiveness. *57:15 the Holy One says...I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive...those with repentant hearts...I will heal them...bringing words of praise to their lips*’ (NLT, or ‘creating the praise of the lips’ NAS). God revives and restores the repentant, recreating unclean lips to praise the Lord.

Our response to His holiness should be humbleness, repentance, and praise. In chapter 64 Isaiah says ‘*We have all become like one who is unclean...*’ If we see the Holy One rightly we see we’re all unclean unholy ones. The OT concept of being unclean often had to do with touching what was unclean, it made you unclean, but Isaiah moves from the Law to the gospel concept of being touched by grace that makes us clean, righteous and holy in Christ. As He came to earth He reversed the pattern of sinners being made unclean by touching lepers, dead bodies, female blood issues, etc. Jesus as the Holy One touches a leper and he’s cleansed, touches the ceremonially unclean and she’s healed, touches the dead and they live and He isn’t contaminated. In Christ Eph 4:24 says we have a ‘*new self...created after the likeness of God in...holiness.*’ In Christ our new identity is ‘*saints,*’ holy set apart ones.

He has power to sanctify, make holy, as He calls us ‘*be holy for I am holy.*’ His holiness helps a wife be like holy women of old in a sweet submissive heart to her husband (1 Pet 3:5). It helps a man ‘*control his own body and live in holiness and honor—not in lustful passion...*’ (1 Thess 4:4-5 NLT). It can help you offer ‘*bodies as a living sacrifice, holy...transformed by the renewing of your mind*’ (Rom 12:1-2). It helps the busy take time to be holy God’s holy calling should move us humbly willingly to be sent and spent in service and to go tell others the good news of how a holy God saves sinners like us. Brokenness in light of holiness is the starting point for usefulness.

In the KJV in v. 5 ‘The first word is “Woe,” “Woe is me,” a vision of self-renunciation. The second word is “Lo,” “Lo, this has touched your lips,” a picture of God’s atoning cleansing that prepares us for life and service. And the third word is “Go,” a call to service.’⁴ May we go tell it on a mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Immanuel is born and He says to us ‘*go and make disciples...lo I am with you.*’ Let’s pray then let’s go serve Immanuel

¹ Some argue *betulah* would be a better term than *almah* to speak of virgins. but *betulah* is used in OT for a married woman/widow (Joel 1:8, not virgin) while *almah* is never used of a married woman in OT. This wouldn't be the term for the wife of Ahaz or Isaiah and note 8:3 calls the prophetess/prophet's wife by different descriptors and gives a different name to her son than 7:14. Ancient Jewish writings indicated *betulah* was not used of betrothed maidens while *almah* could refer to virgin who was betrothed (therefore the better choice for Mary). *Betulah* doesn't seem to automatically refer to virginity as it often adds a qualifier to explain when a women hadn't sexually known a man (Gen 24:16; Lev 21:1–3; Judg 21:12). See Alec Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 84-85, and Brian Borgman sermon on this text at www.sermonaudio.com

² Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vo. 1, p. 286-89.

³ v. 16 switches back to *you* singular, Ahaz, not the *you* plural of v. 14. Another option is that *the boy* of v. 16 is Isaiah's boy God told him to bring in v. 3. If so, that would explain why he was to bring his boy in v. 3.

⁴ <http://www.worthychristianlibrary.com/ab-simpson/christ-in-isaiah/chapter-1-isaiahs-call-and-consecration/>