

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 11-10-13 PM NOTES
"20/20 SPIRITUAL VISION"
ISAIAH 6:1-8
(Non-Series Message)

2 Chronicles 26:16 (NKJV) "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to *his* destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense."

I. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees God As He Is (vv. 1-4)

Adonai—The sovereign one; sovereign and absolute Lord

Yahwah or *Jehovah*—The most sacred name of God— "I Am"

Psalms 8:1a (NKJV) "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent *is* Your name in all the earth..."

Theophany—God's manifestation of Himself to man

Exodus 33:20 (NKJV) "But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'"

1 John 3:2 (NKJV) "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Matthew 5:8 (NKJV) "Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Matthew 6:10 (NKJV) "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven."

1 Samuel 17:45 (NKJV) "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.'"

Transcendence—To rise above; to go beyond everything else

1 Chronicles 16:29b (NKJV) "Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!"

2 Chronicles 20:21a (NKJV) "And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness..."

Psalms 29:2 (NKJV) "Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

II. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees Ourselves As We Are (v. 5)

Job 42:5-6 (NKJV) “⁵ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. ⁶ Therefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Matthew 12:34b (NKJV) “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

“Our problem is not simply that we have made some bad decisions. Our problem is not just that we have messed up. Our problem is that we are—at the very core of our being—sinfully lost, cut off from God, condemned by God, and consequently, destined for hell.”
—David Platt

III. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees the Gospel As the Only Solution (vv. 6-7)

Isaiah 6:7b (ESV) “... your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

“He was cleansed throughout, forgiven to the core, but not without the awful pain of repentance. He went beyond cheap grace and the easy utterance, ‘I’m sorry.’ He was in mourning for his sin, overcome with moral grief, and God sent an angel to heal him. His sin was taken away.”
—R. C. Sproul

IV. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees Our Only Reasonable Response (v. 8)

A. We Respond by Taking the Gospel to our Neighbor

Millennials—Those born between 1980-2000

B. We Respond by Taking the Gospel to the Nations

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A person is said to have perfect vision when it is 20/20. I definitely do not have 20/20 physical vision. That explains why I wear glasses. What I desire more than 20/20 physical vision is 20/20 spiritual vision. I want us as a church to see God as He is, ourselves as we are, the Gospel as it is, the world as it is, and our assignment from God as it is. That is 20/20 spiritual vision. I know of no passage that better helps us see with 20/20 spiritual vision than Isaiah 6:1-8. I know of no better passage to prepare our hearts for the WMC than this passage.

Let's look at a little background of the text. It was about 739 BC and King Uzziah had just died. Uzziah had lots of flaws, but he was still one of the better kings of Judah. He was one of the longest reigning Kings of Judah. He reigned as king for 52 years! In the past 52 years we have witnessed 10 Presidents (Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush #1, Clinton, Bush #2, and Obama). In that same amount of time the people of Judah had been under only one king. Uzziah had turned Jerusalem into a fortified bastion and equipped the city with all the most modern weapons of war for that day. Under Uzziah, the economy prospered, and Judah's military might was close to being comparable with David's time. Uzziah, however, didn't end well. His success went to his head and he thought God's commands didn't apply to him. **2 Chronicles 26:16 (NKJV)** "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to *his* destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense." He decided he was going to do what God had said that only the priests could do and so God struck him with the most dreaded disease of the day – leprosy. Even though Uzziah had been disgraced, when he died, there was great mourning. In addition, there was great insecurity because this was the ruler for the last 52 years and now he was gone. What would happen to the land? The Assyrians were threatening war and the stability the people had known for half a century was now being threatened. It was in this context that Isaiah goes into the temple perhaps to pray about the future of Judah, but God had some other plans for Isaiah.

I. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees God As He Is (V1-4)

There is no hope for 20/20 spiritual vision unless you first see God as He is. A false view of God distorts how you see everything else. God gave Isaiah a vision of the scene in Heaven at the throne of God. What happened is that in the year the **King of Judah** died, Isaiah had a vision of the **King of Kings**. Who was it that Isaiah saw? In the Old Testament the word "Lord" is used in a unique way. When the word appears with a capital "L" and the rest lower case letters, it is translating the Hebrew word *Adonai*. This word means "sovereign one" or "sovereign and absolute Lord". It is more a title for God than a name of God. When the word "LORD" appears in all capital letters it is translating the Hebrew word *Yahwah* or sometimes pronounced *Jehovah*. This is the most sacred name of God. It is the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush. It can be translated as "I Am". This was an unspeakable name for the Jews (which explains why we are not sure how to pronounce it). Sometimes you see both of these names for God in the same verse. For instance, **Psalms 8:1a (NKJV)** "O LORD, our Lord, How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth..." It is literally "O *Yahwah* our *Adonai*" *Yahwah* is the name and *Adonai* is the title. The title *Adonai* was reserved primarily for God. In the New Testament, the Greek word for that title is given to Jesus. When Jesus accepted the title "Lord", it is evidence that He was claiming deity.

What Isaiah saw was what is called a "theophany" which is God's manifestation of Himself to man. No man can see the fullness of God's glory and live. The fullness of His glory is spoken of as seeing "God's face". God told Moses in **Exodus 33:20 (NKJV)** "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." We know that God did allow Moses to see a part of His glory, but not all of it. What Isaiah saw was not the fullness of God's glory or he would have died. Isaiah did see enough of the glory of God to transform his life. From the New Testament we know that one day in Heaven we will see the fullness of

His glory. **1 John 3:2 (NKJV)** “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for **we shall see Him as He is.**” We will not see the reflected glory or limited glory; we will see Him in His pure divine essence when we are purified. **Matthew 5:8 (NKJV)** “Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for **they shall see God.**” None of us in this world has a completely pure heart and that is what prevents us from seeing God. Ah, but for those in Christ there is coming a day when we shall see Him as He is.

The word translated “seraphim” in verse 2 means burning ones. It seems that the seraphim (a plural noun) are an order of angels whose purpose is to worship and proclaim the holiness of God and to serve Him. The tense of the verb in verse three indicates that this praise of the Holy God was their constant activity. Even these angels who were not sinful as man is were still created beings and would not directly gaze on the glory of God. They each had 3 sets of wings. With two wings they covered their face, probably their eyes especially because they could not gaze on the fullness of His glory. With two wings they covered their feet symbolizing that in God’s presence they are continually on holy ground. With the other two wings, they flew to carry out the desires of God. Don’t get the picture here of chubby little babies with wings like the angels in the art of Peter Paul Rubens. They were frightful beings of flaming fire who could strike terror into a sinful man. As we look at these seraphim, we see that they immediately carry out God’s will without hesitation or discussion. I think that this is what Jesus is referring to in the model prayer when He said in **Matthew 6:10 (NKJV)** “Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven.” It is done in Heaven by the angels as we see these Seraphim existing to do the will of God as soon as it is made known to them. Let’s focus on what the seraphim said.

“The LORD of hosts” in verse 3 is actually a name of God “Jehovah Sabaoth”. This seems to especially be the military name of God. He revealed Himself to Israel as the Lord of hosts in times of upheaval and danger and conflict. This is the name that David called upon when he stood alone against the giant Goliath. **1 Samuel 17:45 (NKJV)** “Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of **the LORD of hosts**, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.’” The word “hosts” refers to the armies of Heaven – the angels. The Lord is all powerful so He does not need their power, but because we are unable to comprehend omnipotence, we are reminded of the army without number of powerful angels, one of which killed 185,000 Assyrians – the enemies of God (2 Kings 19:35). In a time of uncertainty and upheaval in the nation, God is revealed to Isaiah as Jehovah Sabaoth.

Notice what it is about God that they worship – it is His holiness. Don’t miss the significance of the repetition of the word “holy”. This is a literary device found in Hebrew forms of literature used for emphasis. In English, we use an exclamation point or bold print, but in Hebrew, emphasis was communicated by repetition. We see Jesus using this literary tool for emphasis when He often said, “Verily, verily” or some translate it “Truly, truly I say unto you”. That was a sign that what He was about to say was of crucial importance. To say something twice was giving it great emphasis, but to say something three times in succession was to elevate it to the highest importance possible. This is the only time in Scripture that a truth about God is repeated three times. The Bible never says “love, love, love” or “grace, grace, grace” or “wrath, wrath, wrath”. Only “holy” is repeated three times. This becomes so imbedded in Isaiah’s mind that one of the names He uses of God in Isaiah 45:11 is “The Holy One of Israel”. The primary meaning of holiness is “separate”. The big theological word for this separateness is “Transcendence”. It means to rise above, to go beyond everything else. When we say that God is holy, we are saying that He is separate, above and beyond us. The old theologians called Him “the Holy Other”. Most people think of God’s holiness as His purity. It includes His purity because He is totally separate from sin, but God’s holiness is more than His purity. It is purity and transcendence. He is pure and He is separate and above everything else. Technically God’s holiness is not one attribute among many others. Holiness is also an attribute of His attributes. His love is a holy love; there is no other love like it. It is transcendent when compared to the greatest manifestation of human love. His wrath is a holy wrath. It is pure and transcendent over the wrath of man. We could say the same thing about all of God’s attributes – His mercy, His grace, His wisdom, His power, etc.

In Heaven God is continually worshipped as “The Holy One”. His holiness is often described as beautiful. Several times we are told to worship the beauty of His holiness. **1 Chronicles 16:29b (NKJV)** “Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!” **2 Chronicles 20:21a (NKJV)** “And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness...” **Psalms 29:2 (NKJV)** “Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” But his holiness also has another impact on us when we really go beyond the rituals and traditions of religion and see God as He has revealed Himself. Notice the scene: The whole place is shaken and filled with smoke. Isaiah has an encounter with the holy, holy, holy God and he is doing anything but enjoying it. The posts of the door were not the only thing shaking! I am cautious about folks who say they have seen a vision of God’s glory or have been graced with a real sense of His presence and they speak of it in terms of happiness and wonderful feelings and casual conversations with Him. Let’s look at Isaiah’s response.

II. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees Ourselves As We Are (V5)

I find this is the common response to one coming into a special manifestation of the presence of the Lord. When God finally reveals Himself to Job at the end of the book, Job says in **Job 42:5-6 (NKJV)** ⁵“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. ⁶Therefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.” In the presence of God, Isaiah was shaken like the posts of the door of the throne room. When we experience the presence of this Holy One, there is an awareness of our own sinfulness. The vision of God’s glory always reduces our estimation of ourselves. This awareness of God in His holiness tears away our disguises and leaves us undone. The word Isaiah uses is not “wow”; it is “woe”. From the lips of a prophet, “woe” is the pronouncement of doom. In the Bible, cities, and nations and individuals are doomed with the use of the word “woe”. But when Isaiah saw the Lord, he used the word to refer to himself! “Woe is me for I am undone!” That word “undone” means to come apart at the seams. It is the idea of unraveling. As long as Isaiah compared himself to other human beings, he came off pretty good, but now He sees God and says, “I am coming apart; I am unraveling; I am ruined and undone”. The further one gets from God, the more he looks at himself with admiration; the closer one gets to God, the more his pride begins to melt away.

The focus of Isaiah’s sense of sinfulness centered on his mouth. Why this focus on his mouth? Perhaps there is a clue in what Jesus said in **Matthew 12:34b (NKJV)** “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Isaiah recognized that his mouth gave indication that his heart was not pure before this perfectly holy One. When God reveals Himself in a clearer and unusual way, there are generally not shouts of “hallelujah”. There are shouts of “woe is me; I am undone”. David Platt put it this way: “Our problem is not simply that we have made some bad decisions. Our problem is not just that we have messed up. Our problem is that we are – at the very core of our being – sinfully lost, cut off from God, condemned by God, and consequently destined for hell.” [John Piper and David Mathis, *Finish the Mission*, page 55].

III. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees the Gospel As the Only Solution (V6-7)

God in his grace and mercy meets Isaiah, this man humbled and broken by his sin, and God cleanses him. The altar referred to here is the altar of sacrifice that pictures in the Old Testament the cross where Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sin. The coal from the altar pictures the fire of God’s judgment having consumed the sacrifice as a symbol of the atonement, the finished work of Christ on the cross. With repentance came the remedy! **Isaiah 6:7b (ESV)** “... your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” Because Isaiah was broken over his sin, the Lord cleansed Him. This is the Gospel. While we were undone, guilty before God without hope, Jesus gave Himself as the sacrifice for us. He Himself is the propitiation (satisfactory payment) for our sin. R. C. Sproul describes the scene in Isaiah 6:6-7: “He was cleansed throughout, forgiven to the core, but not without the awful pain of repentance. He went beyond cheap grace and the easy utterance, ‘I’m sorry.’ He was in mourning for his sin, overcome with moral grief, and God sent an angel to heal him. His sin was taken away” [R. C. Sproul, “The Holiness of God”, Page 47]. It is the revelation of God that shows us our own lack of holiness and it is the mercy of God that

brings the remedy – the Gospel. But the remedy of God (our forgiveness) is not an end in itself. It is to prepare us for what we see next.

IV. 20/20 Spiritual Vision Sees Our Only Reasonable Response (V8)

When God says, “Whom shall I send”, Isaiah must have been overwhelmed because he knew the importance of the words used. To be “sent” meant to function as an emissary or a spokesman for God. Many of God’s spokesmen throughout history have been rejected, persecuted and even killed. Tradition tells us that this is what happened to Isaiah. A spokesman for God has never been a popular and honored task in the eyes of the world. Isaiah, however, answers without hesitation: “Here am I! Send me”. He wasn’t ready before his encounter with God and His holiness. Now he is humbled and cleansed and he is ready to serve in tough places as God’s spokesman. If you have been cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, the only reasonable response is, “Lord, I am ready to go with this life giving, life transforming Gospel wherever You say to go”. Where do we go?

A. We Respond by Taking the Gospel to our Neighbor

Our mission field is right around us. As we will see in a moment, we are to go to the nations and the unreached people groups around the world, but how can we walk past the lost in our nation and our neighborhoods with blinded eyes to their lostness? We have all been sent. In each of the Gospels and in Acts there is a command to go. We cannot ignore it. We are here on mission. How can we know the Gospel and know the sheer joy of being forgiven and refuse to give the Gospel to those God puts in our lives. I have lost neighbors all around me in my neighborhood. I pray for them and seek to share the good news of the Gospel with them. They are just as lost as the unreached people groups in Africa and Asia. I am not saying, “Don’t go to Africa or Asia”. I am saying, “Go to the nations, but also go to the neighbors.” I believe that the “Christian majority” in the Bible belt is a myth. It doesn’t exist. What we have in the Bible belt is a large number of people who have been vaccinated with Christianity. They have been given a perverted version of the Gospel and it has given them a false assurance that they have the real thing. They do not! Young Millennials (those born 1980 to 2000) like no other generation before them are ignorant of the true Gospel and so many don’t want anything to do with the church. One survey said that only 13% of Millennials were interested in “spirituality” of any kind [Thom Rainer]. They are the largest generation in American history (78 million) and a lost generation – even in the Bible belt! The North American Mission Board of our denomination estimates that 75% of Americans do not have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. In some of the northeastern states, that number goes up to 83%. Go to your neighbor! Take one of the TELL tracts (available at the camera stand), walk next door or down the street and share with your neighbors. College students, what a mission field you have right around you.

B. We Respond by Taking the Gospel to the Nations

The most conservative estimate I have found states that there are 11,646 distinct people groups in the world. Our God deserves praise from all of them. He is worthy! Of that 11,646 people groups, 6,734 of them contain less than 2% evangelical Christians. Many of them have little or no access to the Gospel and many of them have no evangelical mission groups working with them. There is no one planting churches and few if any even praying for them. More than a billion of these people in unreached people groups don’t even know who Jesus Christ is. Where are those who will say with Isaiah, “Here I am; send me”? Yes, we must go our neighbors, but we must also go to the nations.

CONCLUSION

The glory of God among the nations is why we exist. That includes your neighbors, your fellow students, and those in the inner city and mobile home parks around us. We cannot do nothing. My prayer is that we have a “God encounter” like Isaiah had and that it results in the Gospel being shared all around us and even to the unreached people groups.