

Hy 4:1,2,3,4  
 Ps 89:4 – Exodus 19f  
 Ps 80:1,2,3  
 Hy 17:1,2,3,4,5,6  
 Hy 23:4,5,6,7,8  
 Isaiah 6  
 Revelation 5:6-14  
 Isaiah 6:3b

Yarrow, December 12, 2010

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Prophet Isaiah heard intriguing song: seraphim/angels sing not just 'holy, holy, holy', but keep calling/saying/singing also 3b: "the whole earth is full of His glory".

- Note: they sing it as *statement of fact*. More, keep singing it.
- Would you agree with that statement?? Where the evidence that earth today in fact full of God's glory?? We see unbelief, anarchy, sin. Christmas in air, but it not God-centred. So: what was different in Isaiah's day that angels could sing this song??
  - Or is this song in fact a wishful dream, and Isaiah writes it down as crutch for a people in darkness as they hope for a better day??
- Hebrew very direct: Isaiah describing a *reality*, not a hope/dream.
  - Yet was in Isaiah's day no evidence to naked eye that God's glory filled earth. And it does so, and faith sees/believes it.

## HEAVEN SINGS THAT TODAY THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF GOD'S GLORY.

1. The surprise of heaven's song,
2. The gospel of heaven's song,
3. The encouragement of heaven's song.

### 1. The surprise of heaven's song

Meaning of words plain enough: glory of LORD fills whole earth. But how we to envisage/understand this?

- Term 'glory' catches notion of impressiveness, weightiness, majesty, importance, imposing aura. Text not speak of glory/impressiveness of person but of LORD, ie, almighty Creator who established bond of love with Israel. Ie, speaks of His *imposing presence*.
- We realize: this 'glory of the LORD', ie, His majesty, impressiveness, imposing presence, importance not limited to one event/day, but is ongoing – for God not change.
  - ∴ seraphs of Isaiah 6 act as do: cover face (God too great to observe), cover feet (they only creatures; how survive in presence of this impressive God), fly (instantly do His will). Meanwhile keep singing to each other: holy – 3x = most holy, superlative. Holy = unique, special, different, ie, no one so imposing, so wonderful as this God
  - This the same glory, impressiveness, overwhelming presence that LORD God showed to Israel at Mt Sinai.
    - Cf Exodus 19:9: dense cloud hides this overwhelming presence – for too impressive.

- Ibid vs 16: from dense cloud comes thunder, lightning, trumpet blast. Cf vs 18. Impressive! What a God! Ibid 20:18.
      - ∴ people keep distance. They finite, and sinful too.... This God too wonderful!
    - This God commands construction of tabernacle → He would live amongst sinners! Awesome! Result: tabernacle built, with instruction re how this God and sinners can live together, ie, sacrifices → Jesus Christ. When complete, Exodus 40:34: glory of LORD filled tabernacle. ∴ vs 35: Moses not enter.... Too imposing, too overwhelming.
      - Note: glory fills *only* tabernacle. ie, moves from top of Sinai into tabernacle. Limited in space, ie, God lives among Israel only....
  - Solomon builds temple for LORD. Then 1 Kings 8:10f – God comes to dwell in temple, His impressive presence fills it. ∴ priests can't enter temple.
    - But in following days/years, His impressive majesty hidden, ie, God enthroned on ark between cherubim in Holy of Holies, but priests able to continue with work in temple and people see nothing of God's presence. ∴ prayer of Ps 80:1: want God to awaken, shine, ie, make His glory/impressiveness evident to naked eye.
- Now Isaiah made to see vision. What?? Sees this *impressiveness of God*, ie, His glory, His *God-ness*.
  - Vs 1: throne is His seat on ark in Holy of Holies in back of temple Solomon built. Isaiah outside, not permitted to enter temple. But sees inside, through curtain dividing Holy of Holies from rest of temple, there Israel's covenant God in majesty → high and exalted. Isaiah can't describe what this God he sees looks like; too glorious. ∴ speaks of what's happening around this God, ie, robe filled temple. Seraphs – wings.... Hears endless singing, vs 3. Meanwhile vs 4: doorposts and threshold of temple doors Isaiah looking through are shaking – as did Mt Sinai in Exodus 19. More, temple filled with smoke, as was Mt Sinai. Point: what a God!!
- Are we to understand that God's presence/glory *new* here? No! God's throne was on ark in back of temple, between cherubim. See Ps 99:1 (2 Sam 6:2). God always enthroned there, *but not always make His imposing presence visible to people* (cf their reaction in Exodus 20:18). What's new is that now LORD *does* make presence visible.
  - More: what's surprising is what angels sing: God's glory fills the whole earth! For:
    - In past God's glory/presence limited to Israel.
    - More: even now vision limited to temple in Jerusalem.
  - So how can angels sing of LORD's glory filling earth??

## 2. The gospel of heaven's song.

Text: "the *whole earth* is full of His glory."

- Remarkable: in time past glory limited to camp of Israel (tabernacle) or Jerusalem as Israel's capital (temple). Now: whole earth! Why this so??
  - Big thing in news in Isaiah's day was rise of Assyrian empire. Ruthless, godless, evil. Later in Isaiah these evil empire attacks Jerusalem..., drags Samaria/Israel into exile....
  - More: first 5 chapters Isaiah make plain that Judah deserving of God's covenant punishment.
    - Cf Isaiah 1:10ff; 3:15f; 5:11f
    - ∴ promise as 1:25f; 2:10ff; 3:13; 5:13.

- Yet in this situation angels of heaven keep singing that God's glory fills earth! More, in this situation Isaiah gets to hear this song. *Why??*
- We say: such evil cannot glorify God throughout earth!
  - But this exactly LORD's point: yes, it can, and yes, it does. How so??
  - Note Isaiah's reaction to vision: vs 5a: Woe to me! Ruined! *Why??*
    - Cf vs 5b: man of unclean lips, ie, sinner. More, lives among sinners, cf 5c.
      - Isaiah knows lesson of Exodus 19/20: God too glorious for sinners to exist in His presence.
      - But Lord reminds Isaiah of gospel of altar in the tabernacle/temple → Jesus Christ! Cf vs 6 so encouraging: coal from altar in temple = sacrifice foreshadowing Christ's coming (Christmas) and death (Good Friday) and triumph (Easter). ∴ vs 7: guilt atoned for. Here gospel of forgiveness of sins in Christ's blood! Ie, God will live with man, paradise restored. Ie, His imposing presence, glory, with man!!
  - This gospel had been for Israel, ie, temple, God's presence, altar *in Jerusalem*.
    - But song of angels: this glory fills *whole earth!*
    - ∴ Q of vs 8: who will tell this good news to all mankind?? Who will sing the song of angels to the nations??
      - Isaiah overwhelmed by and grateful for this glorious gospel of forgiveness, ie, God's presence with sinners ∴ 8b: Me!!
  - ∴ vs 9: LORD gives him privilege of being allowed to spread this song of angels: God's presence, glory, nearness not only for Israel but for all peoples!
    - But Israel is God's people by covenant. ∴ Israel to be serenaded with this song first. ∴ 9: "go and tell *this people*"
    - But how shall Israel respond??
      - Vs 9b: would hear, but not understand; see, but not perceive.
      - Vs 10: word Isaiah to speak would callous the people's hearts, dull their ears, close their eyes.
    - Point: song of angels that Isaiah may speak about would harden God's own people in their sins/unbelief. Ie, despite preaching Israel would refuse to sing on earth the song of the angels in heaven.
      - Imagine that being your commission! Despair!
      - ∴ note Isaiah's reaction, vs 11: not object, not ask for relief. Why not?? Has seen God, touched by His greatness, glory, majesty, God-ness. ∴ no place for back-chat, no place for challenging Him.
      - ∴ only Q: how long do I keep preaching?? Ie, how long keep reminding Israel of the good news angels singing about?
        - God's Answer, vs 11: till Jerusalem and surrounding cities of Judah are ruined, ie, people in exile..., cf vs 12.
- Seems so contradictory. God's glory fill all earth..., but God's covenant people reject Him.... Isn't this the language of failure??

### 3. The Encouragement of Heaven's Song

Recall Israel's purpose: Genesis 12:2f. Israel blessing for nations, ie, through Israel Saviour to come into world.

- Then Israel no better than any other, even reject wealth God gives. *But in due time Saviour shall come*, cf vs 13c. Here the gospel of Christmas!
  - ∴ echo of angels' song in Luke 2:14: peace on earth → not limited to Israel...
    - Jesus Christ reaches out to peoples of other nations, cf healing of demon-possessed man of Gerasenes – not Israelite, Luke 8:26ff; daughter of Syrophenician woman, Mark 7:24ff
    - At ascension: Acts 1:8b
      - ∴ Acts: Paul to gentiles.... And *sinner come to faith, churches established*, ie, God in Holy Spirit comes to live with these sinners!! In Spirit His presence is there, in their hearts – how glorious, wonderful!
      - Includes even us in our corner of Canada. Others elsewhere, be it Brazil, China, so many other places!! That's according to song of angels Isaiah heard!
  - John: this song continues – not just 3x holy part, cf Rev 4:8; also last part re glory filling earth. See Rev 4:11: God created all, upholds ∴ presence! More: new song of Rev 5:9b: through blood purchased a people from every tribe.... ∴ all creatures of earth join songs of heaven in 5:13.

Remarkable. We listen to radio, and songs we hear aren't the song of the angels. But angels keep on singing, and we may sing it too: all earth is today full of glory of Lord. Everywhere He is presence with His majesty, grace and Spirit, even gathers His church of all nations, ie, forgives sins in Jesus' blood and fills sinner with His Spirit – how delightful – even us!!

- So: we on earth will eagerly join song of angels in heaven.
  - Even use Christmas season to press advantage of this message home to peoples everywhere.
  - We'll also take to heart the implicit admonition of 6:9ff: if Israel chose to harden hearts against a message that saw God as reaching outside their own circles, we'll be careful of provincialism ourselves – and make point of being humbly obedient to all God says (no arrogance as if we're better than others because of covenant status) *and* make point of sharing wealth we have with those who don't have it.
  - Ongoing song of angels compels us to!

We at that time of year when thoughts go to birth of Jesus Christ. Includes song of angels in night sky, of glory to God in highest.

- We comfortable with this song: God in heaven indeed glorious, cf vision of Isaiah in 6:1f: exalted!
  - With measure of nostalgia we note that angels of Luke 2 and their song long gone/silenced. Nor we seen vision of Isaiah 6; it's gone too.
  - All we see is brokenness of life.... More, we see *earth* and certainly no glory of God here....
- ∴ draw your attention to song of seraphs in vs 3: sing not just 'holy, holy, holy', but keep calling/saying/singing also 3b: "the whole earth is full of His glory".