



## DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

ISAIAH 6:1-8

JANUARY 2018

# An Encounter with God

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*Isaiah is one of the most important figures in the Bible. His writings are some of the very best, not only in the Bible but in history. His influence on the revelation of the gospel is unparalleled in the Old Testament. His story is fascinating. He was reared in an aristocratic environment. His family was well respected, and he was well trained as an elite in society.*

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He was a faithful Hebrew having been taught the basics of Israel's covenant with God. He lived in the last half of the 8th century B.C. when there was rampant apostasy among the people of God and a gathering storm of military threat. Uzziah had been a prosperous king for the southern tribe, but suddenly he died. Life had been good, but the prospects of the future were at best, uncertain. For whatever reason, Isaiah was in the temple during this sad and shocking time and experienced a radical encounter with the God he had only known conceptually. This encounter launched him into a ministry that confronted both the rebellious Jews and the pagan powers with the

word of God. Later, he also became the voice of God for comfort to the remnant that would come out of exile.

As we look at his life-transforming encounter with God, we are reminded that concepts of God won't do when trouble arises. Concepts can come and go, but we need to know the true nature of the God we have given our lives to. People have concepts of grace that are wrong. They have perceptions of God they borrowed from parents or teachers. They have interpreted the Bible through moralistic eyes. They have speculated, but they don't know for sure until they see God in the self-revelation of his glory. God chose the time when the ruler that Isaiah was accustomed to

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had died to reveal the ruler who never dies and is fully in charge of everything.

Even the hem of his garment filled the temple. The accompanying seraphim declared that the whole earth is full of his glory. God is bigger than the mind can conceive or than the world can contain. Regardless of what might seem to be happening, there is one in charge who is sovereign. The heavenly chorus was chanting about the essence of God's character. "Holy" is the word that distinguishes God from all else. He is separate, different, another category, unique, one of a kind. They sang about his holiness in terms of superlatives. In the Hebrew language, the way to say best is to say something three times. Instead of good, better, and best, the Hebrews said good, good, good. God is uniquely and superlatively different. He is the only sovereignly present, sovereignly powerful, and sovereignly gracious being in existence. "Glory" is a word greatly misunderstood. It means weighty. The glory of something relates to its weight or worth. When a less weighty thing encounters a weightier thing, it doesn't cause much of a quake, but when, say, a heavy stone is dropped into a pool of less weighty water, it causes a splash or a quake. In the story of the Bible, we see quakes accompanying the revelation

of God's holiness. For instance, at Mount Sinai, when God gave the commandments to Moses, the mountain shook. When God's glory entered Solomon's temple, the priest fell to the floor. When Jesus died, there was an earthquake that tore the veil in the temple from top to bottom. At Pentecost, there was shaking. Once in the early days of the church, the disciples prayed and the place was shaken. It is evident that when God's holiness is revealed in glory, everything else shakes. It is no wonder then that Isaiah's life was shaken when he saw the glory of the Lord.

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### **Conviction by the glory of Christ produces a plea for mercy.**

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Immediately upon seeing the glory of God, Isaiah is conscious of his own sin. In light of the brightness of God's being, Isaiah saw as sin things he had never seen as sin before. He was a well-trained orator. His communication skills were his asset—until he saw the Lord. Then his lips were his problem rather than his key to a successful career path. In God's presence, assets become deficits. It was the same with the apostle Paul. He had kept his resume' updated. He was of the best tribe, circumcised properly, righteous according

to the Law, a Pharisee, and zealous for the concept of God he worshipped. But when he saw the living Jesus, he counted all of his assets as deficits in comparison to knowing the one he had seen.

*. . . though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may*

*share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Philippians 3:4–11 (ESV)

True conviction comes in light of seeing ourselves in relation to the purity of Christ. Conviction by the law produces a vow to do better. Conviction by the glory of Christ produces a plea for mercy.

Immediately upon recognizing his unclean lips, Isaiah saw a Seraphim coming toward him with a coal from the altar. Already forgiveness was on the way. He didn't have to go to the altar. Life had been sacrificed on that altar, and the fire had done its job. Judgment had been passed, and the sentence carried out. Isaiah was getting the benefit. His guilt was taken away, and his sin pardoned. He was no longer lingering in grief about his unclean lips.

Quickly the Lord asked for someone to represent him in the world. Isaiah found his hand shooting into the air. Even before he knew the job, he volunteered. Isaiah illustrates that true salvation restores us to partnership with God. That was Adam's position, and it is the same with those who are in Christ, the last Adam. Representing God, speaking his word, doing his work, is not an

obligation anymore. It is the privilege of the restored. It is what we were designed for. We live with our hands in the air volunteering for an assignment that we don't get until we have already signed up. But who wouldn't want to be God's partner?

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We must not settle for a concept of God. **We must see his glory.**

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The Lord then tells him that the people are not going to listen favorably to his message. He is not to get discouraged because it is according to plan. There will be rejection and judgment that follows, but there will be a stump left that has a sprout that becomes the Messiah who creates a new people who will be God's restored family. Isaiah gets the big picture from God. He does his part. The story moves on. The end is assured, and it is good.

How do we see the glory? God is willing to open our eyes to see his glory. He has made it plain. The greatest moment of glory in history was when Jesus went to the cross to take our sin and bring justice and mercy together. We have seen the judgment on the ultimate altar and the Spirit has brought to us the forgiveness that cleanses our lips and our lives. We have seen death give up its prey when

Jesus was raised. We have seen Jesus ascend to the right hand of the Father to rule over all that his blood has purchased. We have before us the glory of God. As the Spirit opens our eyes to Jesus, we quake and our lives begin to be transformed.

One last illustration: In Acts 6 when Stephen was stoned, he looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. It was not hard for him to look at his accusers and forgive. After all, when you have been forgiven by the king, you can forgive. However, if we haven't seen his glory, forgiving others is hard.

We must not settle for a concept of God. We must see his glory. Only an encounter with his glory will shake us enough to transform us.



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