

## Isaiah 6 Sermon church vs world part III

\* Michael Lotito is not a normal man. He's known worldwide because of what he eats. He eats anything. He's eaten shopping trolleys, television sets, 18 bicycles. He's eaten hundreds of razor blades, plates, coins, glasses and bottles, cutlery, beer cans, bullets, nuts and bolts, knitting needles, and phonograph records.

\* His major achievement so far was eating a plane: a Cessna 150 light aircraft. He started munching it in June 1978, and finished it in 1980.

**Amazing.** You can't help but be amazed, and perhaps a little confused and maybe even disgusted, at this man. What he eats defies belief. It is **amazing**.

\* Amazing is defined as "To overwhelm with surprise – to astonish greatly"

Lotito overwhelms us with surprise. He astonishes us. He is amazing.  
Here's the question I really want to ask you today:

**\* Does God amaze you?**

What I mean by that is: "Are you astonished and overwhelmed by the holiness and greatness of God?" Today we're looking at Isaiah 6 and again we're asking ourselves the question "*What is the place of God's church in the world*". And what I would like us to take away from this passage is that when we are no longer amazed by God, then we can be of no use to his purposes in this world. If we are not amazed by God, we **can not have an impact** in this world as Christians. When God has no impact on **us** day by day, we can have no impact for **God**, day by day, in this world.

Isaiah 6 begins by telling us about an **amazing** encounter between Isaiah and God.

It's written around 740BC and King Uzziah, also known as King Azariah, was the king in Israel. He was a good King. Israel became rich and powerful during his reign – he was probably the most successful King in Israel since King Solomon. But then Uzziah became proud and conceited. And the people of Israel became proud and conceited. They took God for granted. They were no longer **amazed** by him. They no longer stood in **awe** of him. God was making no impression on them, and they had become useless as servants of God. And God struck Uzziah down with leprosy and he died. And it's in the year that he dies when Isaiah has this amazing vision. A vision of God. Or more accurately, a vision of the Lord Jesus (\*\*\*) as John 12:41 tells us). Isaiah sees the Lord Jesus in all his glory in heaven.

From verse 1 – He sees Jesus seated on a throne, high and exalted. And the hem of his robe filled the temple. The temple was a BIG place. And it was filled with just the bit on the end of his robe. And the Lord Jesus is surrounded by seraphs, fiery creatures, with three pairs of wings, flying around him, eyes covered – not even able to look directly at the glory of God – singing praise to Him.

\*\* "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.*"

The doorposts shook. The place was filled with smoke.

This was nothing short of amazing. Scary amazing. Life changing amazing. Bigger than Ben Hur amazing. Isaiah is having an experience that the whole of Israel **need to have**. They need to stop being proud and conceited. Like Isaiah, they need to be shaken and overwhelmed by the glory of the presence of God. This is what Israel had forgotten. They were no longer amazed by God. And perhaps there are times we suffer from the same sort of heart.

**\* III** – Why are you here today? What brought you to church? Are you here because you're always here? Are you here to be "topped up" with spirituality? Are you here to do what you think you have to do? ... Are you here to be reminded of God's glory? Are you here to be shaken by his presence and convicted by his Word? Are you here to sing Holy, holy, holy to the God of heaven and earth?

As Isaiah stands there, the seraphs flying around him praising God in song, he is speechless. As their voices were shaking the foundations, Isaiah could barely move. He was discovering again his amazement for the Lord God and when he understands the incredible **holiness** of God as he stands before him, he cannot help but cry out:

\* *“Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”*

You see, when you stand in the presence of God, there is the response that should jump out from us: **“I am unclean!!!”** In other words: I am embarrassed to be standing here like this before the holiness of God! We should see the holiness of God, his beauty and majesty, his overwhelming goodness, and see that before him, we are filthy. Unholy. Undeserving. Unclean. Ruined. We are sinners before the presence of perfection. We have done things that are wrong. We have broken God’s laws and stand guilty and unclean before him!

Isaiah is confronted by the holiness of God, and convicted of his own sinfulness. Are we?

**III** – Old uniform that does not fit.

I found my old scout uniform the other day. From when I was about 15 I guess. And I decided to try it on. It didn’t fit. It was WAY too small. It was an old uniform, from an old part of my life. It didn’t fit me anymore. And it was VERY uncomfortable.

When we stand before the greatness of God, our sin is uncomfortable. It doesn’t fit. It doesn’t belong in the presence of God. It is part of our old life. That sinfulness needs to be taken off. Taken away. Dealt with. We are unclean before a holy, holy, holy God.

In our world, the temptation is to become comfortable with our sin. To make it fit into our life. No-one’s perfect. No-one can stop sinning. We all know that. We’re all sinners. But that sinfulness should make us uncomfortable before God. It should be uncomfortable for a Christian to sin. So uncomfortable that we recognise that sin is a problem! That we want it gone! We want to repent – to turn away – from it.

Israel had become comfortable with their sin. They had stopped being amazed by God. They no longer recognised his holiness. They no longer recognised their own **unholiness**. You see when we diminish our understanding of God’s holiness, we diminish the problem of sin in our lives. For example, we commit a sin – maybe lust, greed, idolatry, hate, drunkenness, coveting. We sin and then we say: “Oh well, no one’s perfect. Sorry God. Let’s move on.”

(Close your eyes and just...) Listen to King David’s confession from Psalm 51 after he committed adultery with Bathsheba:

- \* 1 “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

A true understanding of God’s holiness is the only thing that can lead us to **true, heart-felt repentance** of our sin before God.

And **WHEN WE DO** come to that heartfelt repentance, we can experience what Isaiah did: verses 6-7:

\* *“Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from*

*the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; **your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.**"*

When Isaiah admits his sinfulness before a holy God, God offers to **take away** his sin. A burning hot coal – a symbol of fire for cleansing, taken from the altar of sacrifice. Pointing us towards Jesus himself as God's sacrifice for our sins.

And only when sin is taken away, do we see the turn around. Verse 8:

\* *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"  
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

God calls for **true repentance** and we cannot take that message into the world unless we have experienced it ourselves. We must be convinced of **God's holiness** and we must be convicted of **our own sinfulness** if we are to be his messengers in this world.

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I want us to finish today by thinking about what happened when Isaiah took this message to Israel – a message about God's holiness and the need for repentance. What happened in verses 9-13? Israel ignores him. Israel would not repent. And God let them perish. God told Isaiah they would continue to ignore him until (verse 11): *"the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted .. until the land is utterly forsaken."*

Here is the warning: If we do not take the holiness of God **seriously**, if we do not take our need for repentance **seriously**, then we will face judgement **seriously**.

**III** – No doubt we've heard this week about the ship, the Pasha Bulker, stranded in Newcastle at Nobby's Beach. It was reported that 56 ships were radioed and told to move out to sea because of the expected storm. All except 11 of them moved out. Allegedly, they had the warnings, but some decided not to take notice. They heard, but didn't listen. They saw the danger, but didn't perceive it. And what was the result? Disaster.

We **must** listen to the warnings. As we stand before God, we should be **amazed** at his holiness and **convicted** of our sinfulness. Because if we cannot understand those two essential facts of God's message, we use are we to Him in his world?

And you know, even with all the sinfulness of Israel, God was still faithful with his plans. Verse 13 tells us that he still has a plan to save Israel:

\* *"But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."*

God will still raise up a saviour (a holy seed), even from the ruins of Israel. God promised to bring salvation to the world through Israel. And God is faithful to his promises – and we see that through him sending Jesus. But God is also faithful with his judgements. He will still punish unrepentant hearts.

\* Isaiah 6 points us towards our need to be **amazed** by the holiness of God and **convicted** of the sinfulness of our own hearts. If we are to serve God in this world, we must begin **here** with our faith. A true faith, a true heart for God and his world, begins with understanding that **he is holy and we are not**. We are ruined, and we need our sin taken away. We must understand that so we can explain it to our world. If you are not at that place in your faith, then take the opportunity, today, to come to that place. Perhaps you've wandered away. Perhaps you've developed a "who cares?" attitude to sin. Perhaps you need to re-discover that amazement for God and his holiness. If so, please pray with me now.