

Seeing & Responding to Christ's Ministry Portrayed in God's Tabernacle Isaiah 6:1-13

Today we are confronted with what it means to come face to face with God.

In Exodus, God sent a seismic sound and light show that shocked and awed the people of Israel.

Then He left behind the plans to build a portable Doorway to Heaven where humans could come face to face with God, by way of substitutionary sacrifices. Coming before God is awesome.

That is what we need to think about more often, what it means to come face to face with God, which is only through Christ.

FACE TO FACE WITH GOD

Only what is attached to God will last forever.

Anything that is not attached to God needs to be detached from our lives.

As we open to Isaiah 6, think about the balance sheet of your life. As one famous missionary once said while laying on his deathbed, "Only one life, t'will soon be past; and only what's done for Christ will last".

That means the most important measure of life is how useful we are to God. The only enduring parts of our life will be those spent serving God.

The Tabernacle was a reminder for us who live on Earth, of the reality of God upon His Throne. Today, what response does God expect of us when we see Him as He is this moment, seated upon His Throne?

When we look closely we see that God's plan for preparing us to be used as His servants has not changed in thousands of years. Open with me to Isaiah 6, and the amazing call God gave to Isaiah.

GOD SHOWED ISAIAH HIS GLORY

From the Old Testament we find that our unchanging, immutable God has the same plan. To reach the godless society God called him to reach, Isaiah was told a timeless truth.

More than anything you do, God is interested in who you are.

The key to usefulness in life, doing what God designed us to do, is first being what God wants us to be.

Listen to God's voice as He tells us the story of His call and preparation of Isaiah.

In this chapter we'll read we see the keys to a life that is useful to God. In the end, that is all that will matter.

Isaiah 6:1-13 In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.** 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because 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 live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away; And your sin purged." 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." 9 And He said, "Go, and tell 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 shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." 11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, 12 The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. 13 But yet a tenth will be in it, And will return and be for consuming, As a terebinth tree or as an oak, Whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump."

Prayer

Simply stated we can conclude from a careful study of the Bible that:

GOD'S DESIRE FOR EACH OF US IS CONSECRATION

There are 3 stages that are keys to usefulness for God. There is a pathway for each of us who want to follow that leads us into daily, monthly, and life-long usefulness to God.

Here are the stages. Let me tell you what they are and then show them as they are described in these verses. God wants you and me to:

- 1-Remember God's Holiness
- 2-Realize my Sinfulness
- 3-Receive God's Cleansing

Now trace these truths into your Bibles with me. Write them down so that you can come back often and remind yourself of these simple truths that have been repeatedly taught

and explained to God servants for all of the 2,700 years since God spoke them to Isaiah.

First, to be useful to God we must always:

1-REMEMBER GOD'S HOLINESS

That is the message of Isaiah 6:1-4.

God is by nature holy. He is separate from sin, perfect, sinless, flawless and pure.

So no matter how compassionate He is, no matter how full of grace and overflowing with mercy: God is still Holy, Holy, Holy.

In the realm of eternity, around the Throne at the center of the Universe there is one word that is repeated regularly, over and over again. Holy, Holy, Holy is our God.

For many of us, just saying or hearing those words begins a song playing in our hearts and minds. Do you know that song?

With just our voices, lift these truths to God, from each voice and heart, agree with what God wants us to do: **Remember God's Holiness.**

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

The first key to any usefulness for eternity is: Remembering God's holiness.

Repeat that with me all together: **Remember God's Holiness.**

Say it again, louder and confidently so it stays on our hearts: **Remember God's Holiness.**

Thinking about His Holy Presence and standing before His Throne, and falling on our faces before Him, leads us to the second key.

Being useful to God means thinking long and deeply upon how far we fall short of His Glory, and how much we need His gracious, forgiving, and cleansing touch.

Second, to be useful to God I must always remember God's Holiness as I:

2-REALIZE MY SINFULNESS

That is the message of Isaiah 6:5.

The closer we get to the Light, the more of our sinfulness we can see.

When Job came to understand the Almighty El-Shaddai he confessed (Job 42:5-6).

When Peter saw the power of God the Son displayed he cried out (Luke 5:8) “depart from me, I am a sinful man”.

And when John the Beloved Apostle, saw Christ in his unveiled glory on Patmos, he fell at His feet as if dead (Revelation 1:17).

The theme of those who stand around the Throne is that the Lamb who was slain, was slain for their sin. He gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20) was Paul’s testimony.

The closer we are to God’s Holiness the more I Realize my own personal Sinfulness.

Again, the testimony of saints who have walked this path before us can help us frame fitting words to express our need of the Redeeming Lamb’s precious shed blood. In our hymn book turn to # 196 “There is a Fountain” and join me again with just your voices declaring that though we are great sinners, our Savior is greater and He washes ALL my sins away.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Thirdly, to be useful to God I must always remember God’s Holiness, Realize My Sinfulness, and then cry out and ask to:

3-RECEIVE GOD’S CLEANSING

That is the message of Isaiah 6:6-7.

When we Remember God’s Holiness, the Light of our Holy God makes us Realize our Sinfulness.

That leads us to the work of the Cross, to the sacrifice Christ offered once perfectly and completely to pay the penalty of sin for all who come by faith.

Usefulness comes to those who will be cleansed and who will walk in the light and stay full of God’s Spirit.

The most useful servant is a humble believer who readily confesses the complete cleansing that the gracious work of Jesus accomplished. Once we are assured of His cleansing the evil one can’t find a place to plant seeds of doubt and despair. We can affirm that God will never condemn me (Romans 8:1); and that though my sins were as deeply staining me as crimson I am white as snow in God’s sight. That truth makes us full of His hope, welling up

with the joy of the Spirit, and kept by His Peace.

To the end of our lives, whether in weakness, sickness, or even dementia (as the great hymn writer John Newton suffered at the last years of his life) we can confidently express our conviction that though we were great sinners, Jesus is a Great Savior. Why not practice stating your testimony aloud with me right now, through his words you know so well:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

Isaiah 6 records what happens when we get to see God as He really is.

MEETING THE KING OF THE UNIVERSE AT THE DOORWAY TO HEAVEN

Now, back to the Doorway to Heaven that God had built as a guide for us to understand Christ's work. Remember we started with the nation of Israel at Sinai.

After God came down from Heaven to the Earth, the mountain began quaking, a cloud of fire surrounding God was burning the top of the mountain, and a pillar of smoke rose like from a blast furnace.

POINT 1: OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

Exodus 19:16-20 (NKJV):

16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that **there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud**, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. **17** And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.**18 Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.****19** And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. **20** Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Each of the elements surrounding God's Holy Throne speak of a scene so awesome, and so massively powerful that frail creatures like we are as humans would have trouble surviving.

So our God who is like a consuming fire, and dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim.

6:16), whose face shines like the Sun in its brightness (Mt. 17:2; Rev. 1:16) came down to Mt. Sinai to show Moses how to construct a Doorway to Heaven. God was offering an access point for humans to come before Him.

POINT-2: ALMIGHTY GOD INVITES US TO ENTER HIS PRESENCE

Exodus 24:14-16 (NKJV) And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them." ¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

The Doorway to Heaven, called the Tabernacle, was so important to God He went through the amazing, fiery entrance, the quaking mountain, and blast furnace pillar of smoke, then had Moses wait in the waiting room for six days. Finally God begins to speak.

POINT 3: GOD OPENS THE DOORWAY TO HEAVEN

Now look at Exodus 25:1 where God showed Moses a pattern in the Heavenly Tabernacle, and then starts with the furniture.

Exodus 25:1-2, 8-9 (NKJV) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering." ⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.

What does God reveal? How to walk on Holy ground while here on Earth.

WALKING ON HOLY GROUND

Today I would like to invite you to walk with me on holy ground. That Holy Ground is the verses in which we find our Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory.

God left a visible plan of salvation for the world. For 500 years it was a tent that Moses built. Then it was in a Temple that Solomon

First join me in a quick overview of how God laid out the plan of salvation so clearly in the detailed plans for the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle portrays a seven-step plan of salvation:

A sinner is outside the Tabernacle, kept away by a 7 ½ foot high white fence, set of posts held up by 60 solid brass sockets. There is only one way or gate into the enclosure, which opened directly in front of the Brazen Altar. That altar is the Cross of Jesus, which is where our spiritual life begins at salvation.

The next step after salvation is the regular cleansing at the Brazen Laver.

After being cleansed the next door leads to the Holy Place [about the size of a large living room (30 x 15)] where we find the Golden Table of Bread as we fellowship with Jesus through His Word.

Then guided by the light of the Golden Lamp stand we are able to walk confidently as I John 1:7 says.

Then and only then can we understand the power of prayer as portrayed by the Golden Altar of incense.

Through prayer we enter the Holy of Holies of God's very presence.

In that Holiest Place we find the peace and security of the Ark of the Covenant, the blood sprinkled mercy seat and the glow of the Shekinah of God's presence.

THE TABERNACLE ENTRANCE:

THE COURTYARD OF THE TABERNACLE was one hundred fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide. Its single gate, on the east side, was thirty feet wide and seven and a half feet high, allowing a large number of people to enter at the same time.

This entrance is a graphic picture of Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way" and "I am the door." Just as there was only one entrance to the Tabernacle, there is only one way to God-the only Way and the only Door, Jesus Christ.

Christianity is exclusive, not because Christians make it so but because God has made it so. Throughout the centuries, of course, Christians have made the earthly church exclusive in many wrong ways. But God has intentionally made His spiritual, eternal church exclusive. It can be entered only through Jesus Christ.

Psalm 100: Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He *is* God; *It is* He *who* has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name. For the Lord *is* good; His mercy *is* everlasting, And His truth *endures* to all generations.

"O Worship the King" # 10

ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING:

The first article of furniture in the outer court was **THE BRONZE ALTAR**. It was made of acacia wood sheathed with bronze. It was seven and a half feet square, stood four and a half feet off the ground, and was topped with a bronze grate. The coals were placed underneath the grate and the sacrifice was placed on top.

On the four corners of the altar were horns, to which the animal was bound when it was being sacrificed. The bronze altar is again a perfect picture of Jesus Christ, who Himself was a sacrifice for sin.

At the Altar of Brass I see Jesus on the Cross – paying completely the

penalty for my sins as the Lamb of God.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

"Jesus Paid it all" # 210

LAVER:

The next piece of furniture in the court was **THE LAVER** or basin, also made of bronze. In it the priests would wash their hands, and even sometimes their feet, as they went about the bloody services of sacrifice.

Here is a picture of Jesus Christ as the cleanser of His people. Once we have received forgiveness for our sins through Christ's sacrifice of Himself, we still need His daily cleansing that restores fellowship and joy.

At the Laver of Brass I see Jesus on His knees – cleansing my sins.

John 13:4-10 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." 8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

Hebrews 9:14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

"There is a Fountain" # 196

LAMPSTAND:

On the left, as the priest entered, was a solid **GOLD LAMPSTAND** having seven branches, each filled with the purest olive oil. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world," Jesus said (John 9:5).

When He left the world, the world was left in darkness, and only for believers is He the light of life. He is the light that directs our paths, the One who, through the Spirit, illumines

our minds to understand spiritual truth. He is the One who, by the indwelling Spirit, guides us through the world of darkness. He is our light.

At the Golden Lamp Stand I see Jesus in the Upper Room - opening my mind to His Word.

Luke 24:45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Ephesians 1:17-18 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

“Spirit of the Living God” # 247

TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE:

On the right was **THE TABLE** on which was **THE SACRED BREAD**, or show-bread. This table, like the base of the altar, was of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was three feet long, one and a half feet wide, and two and a quarter feet high.

Every Sabbath twelve loaves of fresh bread were set on it, one for each of the twelve tribes. At the end of the week, the priests, and only the priests, were allowed to eat the loaves.

Jesus is our sustenance. He is our table of sacred bread. He is the One who feeds us every day, who sustains us with the Word. The Word is not only our food but our light. And the oil is the Spirit of God, who lights the Word for us. The altar of incense pictures Jesus interceding for us, the perfect Sacrifice becoming the perfect Intercessor.

At the Golden Table I see Jesus on the hillside - feeding me the Bread of Life.

John 6:11 And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.

Hebrews 2:14-18 *on screen*: Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

“Break Thou the Bread of Life”

Hymn #274

PASSING OF THE BREAD

“Behold the Lamb”

(Eb)

P&W #164

ALTAR OF INCENSE:

Farther in and to the center of the Holy Place was **THE ALTAR OF INCENSE**. It, too, was of gold-overlaid acacia wood, one and one-half feet square and about three feet high. On this altar were placed the burning coals from the bronze altar in the courtyard, where sacrifice was made. These three pieces of furniture also picture Christ. Everything in the outer courtyard was connected with salvation and the cleansing of sins.

- Jesus accomplished His sacrificial work on earth, outside God's heavenly presence.
- The outer court was accessible to all the people, just as Christ is accessible to all who will come to Him.
- But in His heavenly sanctuary He is shut off from the world, temporarily even from His own people.
- From His heavenly place now, Jesus lights our path (pictured by the golden lampstand), He feeds us (pictured by the table of sacred bread), and He intercedes for us (pictured by the altar of incense).

At the Golden Altar I see Jesus on His face in Gethsemane - praying for me in Hebrews 7:24-27 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

“Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Hymn #433

Hebrews 7:24-26 *on screen:* 24But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;

MERCY SEAT

In this holiest of earthly places was only one piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant. On the lid was the mercy seat, on which were the cherubim of glory, angelic figures made of solid gold. It was between the wings of those angels, on the mercy seat, that God met men. “And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel” (Ex. 25:22). If God and man were to meet it could only have been there.

At the Golden Mercy Seat I see Jesus pouring out Himself (His Blood) as my Advocate- taking away my sin (propitiation) 1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Romans 3:25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

ARK OF THE COVENANT:

The central, in fact the only, thing in the Holy of Holies was **THE ARK**, which represents Jesus Christ, the true mercy seat. Made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, it was about three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide and two feet high.

When we meet Jesus Christ as Savior, we are ushered into the presence of God, into the true Holy of Holies. God no longer communes with men between the wings of cherubim on a gold mercy seat. He communes with men in His Son, by whom the veil was torn in two. Jesus Christ is the mercy seat. Only on the basis of the blood of a goat would God have fellowship with Israel, and only on the basis of the blood of Christ will God have fellowship with men. John, in using the term “propitiation,” in 1 John 2:2, relates Jesus to the mercy seat, since that very is used for mercy seat in the Septuagint translation of Exodus 25:171.

At the Golden Ark I see Jesus in Heaven holding the rope anchoring my soul in Hebrews 6:19 This hope we have as **an anchor of the soul**, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

Hebrews 10:19-25 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 13:8, 15-16, 20-21 *on screen:* ⁸Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever. ¹⁵Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. ²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

PASSING OF THE CUP

“There is a Redeemer” (D,Eb)

P&W #111

“And Can it Be”

Hymn #203