



Date: 2 December 2018
Services: 730, 930 T and 930 P (via video)
Series: Christ(mas) is coming
Passage: Revelation 22:1-5
Title: ...and we shall see his face

Outline

1. **Mustn't see God's face!**
2. **Will see God's face!**

INTRODUCTION

- Please turn with me to p685 – Isaiah 6
- Just under 70% of Australians – **say** they believe in God, but I want to show you the god most believe in.
- He is pocket size. There is nothing much to him. You can put him away when you don't need him and pull him out when you are feeling a little sad or unwell, and then put him back again.
- Every now and again you come across him by accident as you are going through your pockets, and give him a thought now and then.
- He's convenient, and not very demanding. A little bit like Santa Claus.
- Then there those who are a little more spiritual, and their God is a little more substantial... there is a little more to carrying him around and living with this God... and you are certainly aware that he is there.... But again, he's not very demanding..... and when you are tired of him, you can put him away until you have more time!
- Well.... It's a joke isn't it... this god people believe in...?
- In the Isaiah passage (p 685), we meet the **real** God; we see what he is **really** like.
- Many people say – and you've probably heard it said – 'I'd believe in God if he would just turn up and show himself!'
- People **think** they'd like to see God!
- But right throughout the Bible we see that's it is actually **terrifying** to see God!!
- the vision Isaiah saw is a humbling reminder, that in fact we'd surely rather **not** see God.
- For it would be awesome... terrifying. There is something within us that makes it very **awkward** for us if God were to turn up.
- Have a look with me at 6:1 *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.*
- Enthroned – high and lifted up. This is no little equal God.
- **He** is in charge. You are **not**.
- This is a God who is **better, bigger, higher**, more **exalted**.
- you don't meet God as an **equal**... Only a **fool**, only a **blind** person thinks they meet God as an **equal**... God is **not** your **equal**.. he is **far above** and exalted **above** you and he is **enormous**. //

- Now the temple in Jerusalem in 740BC makes this studio look like a tiny little shed. The temple was a magnificent building. Huge foundations. Magnificent timber work. Huge building. 3 football fields.
- And yet in this vision he has, it says the train or hem of God's garment completely fills the temple. My hem of my trousers is about 2 centimetres. Who knows how vast then this vision of God must have been if just the **hem** filled the temple. This is an **enormous huge, awesome and fearful God. THIS IS THE REAL GOD!**
- You don't have a nice warm glowing experience when you first meet this God.
- **You fall on your knees trembling. //**
- **Above** God he sees the **seraphs**. We don't know a lot about them... they are **supernatural angelic beings...**
- And what was it do you think that they were singing about?
- They had been with God since time began... what do you think it was that impressed them about God?
- It wasn't **love, love, love** or **power, power...** it is **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**
- It's the song sung to God and to the Lamb in the book of Revelation...
- It's not about **moral goodness** – at least its ever so much **more** than that... because in the Bible you have holy plates, holy curtains, holy.... whatever – only ever to be used in the direct worship of God.
- It means that God is like nothing else – he's **separate from** us... it means that God is unlike you and unlike me... he's **other** than you... he's in a completely **different category**.
- He doesn't **think** like you, **act** like you, **do things** like you. He is completely '**other**'.
- And suddenly Isaiah cries out in despair. /
- He says '**I am ruined!**'
- The word actually means '**unpicked**' – it's what you could do to a garment where you could unpick it and pull it apart into its various little bits of shapes of fabric.
- He's saying 'my whole being is being torn to pieces because I am an unclean man'.
- He **sees** God and becomes immediately aware of his **sin and corruption....**
- The understanding was – right back to Moses... that you **couldn't** see God and **live**.
- With your **stain** and **rebellion** – your **uncleanness** – your **unholiness....** You **cannot** be in the same **place** as **God**.
- Now... He's come **face to face** with **light** and **purity** and **holiness** and **goodness** and he senses for the first time, what a **mess** he is!
- And he figures he has no right to **live**.
- Brothers and sisters – this the terrifying holiness of God. //
- We are all so **casual** about sin and our own state before God aren't we?
- If someone feels a little unworthy before God... we're likely to suggest they need some **self-esteem** counselling and that they've been **damaged** in their **childhood**.
- No friends – this is the **reality... this** is what God is like. And if he were to turn **up**, we'd just want him to go **away**. /
- **His holiness would be unbearable. //**
- Which is where in Isaiah's vision, we see God's amazing **grace!**
- Suddenly (v6) 'one of these seraphs, these burning hot pure ones, flew to me or flew at me...' armed with a red hot living coal taken off the altar – taken off with tongs - it was so hot that this supernatural being couldn't pick it up.

- It comes roaring **straight** at him and he thinks 'this is it.... this is how God will **finish** me'.
- But something **extraordinary** happens... a **beautiful** thing happens. The seraph comes right up to him with the coal and burns his lips - not to **kill** him but to **transform** him.
- And the seraph talks to him (v7), 'see this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.'
- And it's one of those difficult things to get clear with Christianity... and that is, that God is saying that **sin is so much more frighteningly serious** than we know or are willing to admit... but **God loves to forgive** it.... in an **instant**.
- You see the **white hot terrifying holiness...** of God and when **seen** clearly and acknowledged as Isaiah did; then you see clearly **this wonderful liberal, lavish, free grace...** which says to a man like Isaiah... you're **forgiven**... God will **take away** your sin... !
- Like the **tax collector** in Jesus' story who simply said 'have mercy on me a sinner' and went home right before God.
- Like the **son** who admitted he admitted his unworthiness to his father and was welcomed **home** with a **party**
- Like the **woman** who aware she had been forgiven much poured perfume over Jesus' feet.
- Or the **woman caught in adultery** to whom Jesus says 'go and sin no more'...
- Like the **millions of people** in the last 2000 years have come to realise on the one hand the **horror** of their **sin** but on the other the **beauty** of **forgiveness**... //
- **How can it be** that God can **forgive** sins like this?
- How can he promise Isaiah his sin is **atoned** for?
- How can he take **our** sin?
- And of course - we discover the whole basis for the mercy and forgiveness promised in the prophecy is all because (Ch 53) which we looked at two weeks ago - the Suffering Servant - *was pierced for our transgressions, was crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that brought us peace was upon him...*
- **Terrifying holiness... yet amazing grace.** ///
- now turn over with me to Revelation ch 21 (p 1252)
- ... we discover that God is promising a whole **new world... new heavens and a new earth...**
- Where everything that is wrong with **this** world will be **gone**..
- Are you **sick** now? Or in pain? You'll be **healed** in the new creation - your **pain** - your cancer - will be **gone**.
- Is your body giving **out** now? Everything seems to be a struggle? // You'll have a new **body**
- Have you been treated **unfairly** here? **Abused? Used?**
- You'll see **justice** in the new creation!
- Are you wrestling with **sin** now?
- You'll wrestle no longer because you'll be perfectly **remade** in the **image of God**
- You facing **death?** - or you've **lost** someone you love through death - you'll never face death **again** - either your **own** or someone you **love**...!
- Do you long to **dwell** with God and in his **presence**??
- You **will** - for the dwelling of God will be among his **people** and he will be their **God** and **we** will be his **people**... and what we know now as the presence of God by his **Holy Spirit** - as a **deposit** - then we will know the in **fullness**... for he will dwell with us and we with him!!
- Now look with me at ch 22 - p 1253

- I want you to notice the astonishing nature of life in the new city...
 - The passage is full of imagery of course... but I want you to notice the **life** in the city
 - Have a look with me from 22:1 - *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life...*
 - The river of the water of life... and the tree of life
 - What did Jesus promise those who came to him? John 4:13 - *whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life?*
 - Here is the absolute **fulfillment** of that promise... **rivers** of **living water**...
 - And do you remember when Adam and Eve were put **out** of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24? *After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Access to the tree of life - **cut off!***
 - What do we **see here in Rev 22?**
 - That the curse has been reversed - not simply **reversed** - but in **abundance**... there's a tree on **each side** of the **river**... there's no longer any **curse** on **humankind**.. and what is more, we are told that the **leaves** of the **tree** are for the **healing** of the **nations**... that is, the **pain** and **suffering** of **humanity** throughout **history** will be **no more!!**
 - (incidentally, the word used for 'tree' here is not the usual word used **elsewhere** in the NT, but a word meaning a **dried piece of timber**... **This** word **IS** used elsewhere (Acts 5:30, 10:19; 13:29; Gal 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24) for that '**tree**' on which Jesus **died** and by which means, we are **healed** and **restored** to him and can now have **life!!**)
 - Let's pick up the passage again from v3 - *No longer will there be any **curse**. The throne of God and of the **Lamb** will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 **They will see his face**...*
 - We his **servants**... will **serve** or **worship** the **Lamb of God** - **Jesus the lamb of God** who has taken away our **sin**... and then do you see? - *we shall see his face!!!*
 - **We shall his face**... and we'll have no **fear** when we see his face
 - We won't be thinking we are about to lose our life because we've seen his face... we won't be thinking like Isaiah did that seeing his face will be our undoing!!
 - We will see his face and **live**... because our **unholiness** has been **taken away** - our sin **atoned for** - **and** we will be **perfectly renewed** in the **image** of **God!!**
 - Can you **imagine**...?? centuries of fearing that you could never see God's face and live... The full **glory** of God **never** available to **sinful humankind**...
 - But **then** - *we shall see his face!!*
 - How **brilliant!!**
 - **We shall see his face**
 - His **beauty**
 - His **glory**
 - His **majesty**
 - We shall in his face his **love**, his **mercy**, his **compassion**...
 - We shall see his **understanding**... his **kindness**...
 - We will see **Jesus!** Our **Saviour**; our **rescuer**; the one who **died** and rose **again**
 - We shall see our **Lord**... the **king of Kings**... the **Lord of Lords**... who has triumphed over the **evil one**... and whose reign of **righteousness** will **never end**...!
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- Brothers and sisters – you may be sitting there this morning saying “Mark – so what?”
- How is this going to change tomorrow...?
- You wouldn't believe my life now – I'm hard pressed financially, I live with unbearable pain, there are family members from whom I'm estranged; the kids are driving me crazy and the holidays have barely begun; I need a job; have you seen my medical bills...? I can't even begin to think about Christmas...!
- ...and you're telling me about something in the distant future about seeing Jesus' **face**? //
- I hear you...
- So what difference does this make?
- three things – all begin with P – I hope you might remember them...
- **Perspective** – as we have been recalling... Advent is about lifting our eyes from **ourselves**, our **circumstances**... from the **muck** of this **world**... to the **return** of **Jesus** and the **world to come**
- Sometimes when we are in the thick of things, it's hard to have perspective...
- ... I love going up Laguna lookout – or Mt Tinbeerwah lookout – because you see the lie of the land... how the pieces fit together. There's perspective...
- **Advent** is meant to give us **perspective**... yes – this **world** and our **life now** is full of **challenges**... and not for a moment do I want to **trivialise** those... but there is a world to **come** which will be absolutely **glorious**... and we still stand on that that **day** in the **glory** and **wonder** of the **new creation** and see our **Saviour face to face**...//
- And with that perspective – we see what really matters – our **relationship** with **Jesus** – our **forgiveness**... among all our needs – our **greatest** need has **already been met** // by **Jesus!**
- **So – perspective; then:**
- **Perseverance** – the **perspective**, helps us to **persevere**... Paul calls all that we're going through now '**light and momentary troubles**'... and **gaining** that perspective, **helps** us keep **going**... because something **better** is coming... and what we face now really **is short** and **temporary**...
- when you're putting in a long hard day at work or in the Lion's truck or whatever it is – you're helped to persevere, knowing the end is in sight...
- the end is in sight... it may only be moments away – when **we shall see his face**...! **Keep going... remember? – run the race... with perseverance.... As Jesus did... knowing the joy that was to come for him!!**
- **Perspective, perseverance... and:**
- **Presence** – because **that same Jesus** upon whom we look forward to **gazing**... is actually **present** with us **now** in our **struggles**... by his **Spirit** – dwelling **within!!**
- And his **presence**... **calms** us, **guides** us, **empowers** us, **strengthens** us... the Psalmist in Ps 16 – because God is at my right hand – **I will not be shaken**... //
- So **cling** to his **presence**... **run** to **him** – find **refuge** in **him**... And amidst the challenges of **tomorrow**... take time to catch a **glimpse** of the **future**... and to **joyfully anticipate** all that it will mean for us that one day '**we shall see his face**'.