

The Holy of Holies

Isaiah 6-7

INTRODUCTION: Thanksgiving is over, we are making a b-line for Christmas. What on earth would a series on the tabernacle have to do with the birth of Jesus? More than you would ever imagine...

We have been examining the furniture of the tabernacle and looking at it as a Pattern for Prayer - remember that Jesus said, "My house shall be a house of prayer". So far we have seen...

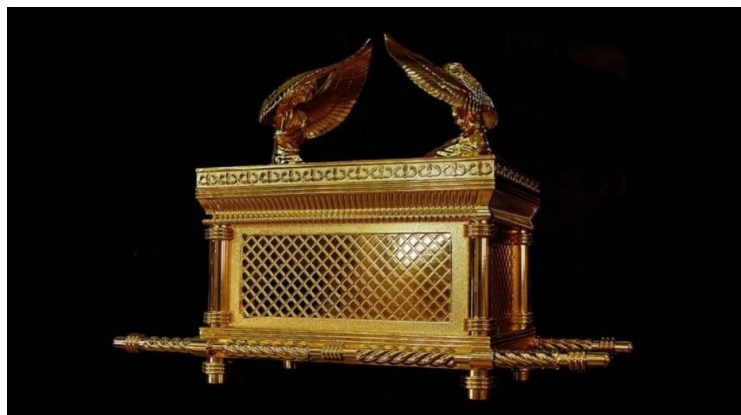
- The **Brazen Altar** - where sacrifices were made, reminds us that we can only pray by way of the cross of Christ - the lamb of God who takes away our sin.
- The **Laver** - where washing took place symbolizing the appropriation of grace. We said - if we cherish iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear us... but the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- The **7 branch Candlestick** which is symbolic of the 7 fold Spirit of God - We talked about Praying in the Holy Spirit. If you missed that one get on the Maximum Life podcast and listen to it. One of the most important sermons you'll ever hear.
- **The Table of Shewbread** - The Word of God.
- **The Alter of Incense** - Points to the Worship of God
- The next and final aspect of the Tabernacle is the Holy of Holies in which was housed the **ARK of the COVENANT**.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT - The ark that Moses had Bezalel make was an oblong chest made of acacia wood (Ex 31:1–5; 37:1–9). The chest measured approximately 45 by 27 by 27 inches, and was overlaid inside and out with the purest gold.

It was fitted with two pairs of rings through which poles were slid to make it portable. This signified that 1. God would go with them, wherever they went. 2. They must be ready to travel at a moments notice.

Now keep in mind that everything contained in the tabernacle was a replica of the same pieces of furniture in the Temple of Heaven.

As such the ARK would be a replica of the **footstool** before the throne. As a matter of fact, archaeologists have discovered thrones from ancient Near Eastern kingdoms with a look similar to that of the ark of the covenant.



Inside the Ark: Aaron's rod that budded, and a bowl of Manna. The two tablets of the 10 commandments,

More confirmation that the ark symbolized the Lord's throne/footstool is seen in the fact that the LAW would be placed within it (Ex. 25:21). This is significant because ancient Near Eastern kings often kept a copy of the laws of their kingdoms at their feet.

I point that out to indicate that there was no replica of the throne - the throne was unseen. *I'll show you what that is significant later.*

The lid of the ark was called the "mercy seat" or "place of mercy" (Ex 25:17). It was a slab of gold fitting over the top of the ark and having an importance of its own. Once a year the high priest was to make atonement for the people of Israel by sprinkling the mercy seat with the blood of bulls and goats (Lv 16:2-16).

In fact, the English expression "mercy seat" is related to the Hebrew word for "atonement."

Two cherubim (winged Angels) were positioned over the mercy seat, touching their wings together.

NOW - SUPPOSE YOU ENTERED INTO THAT INNER SANCTUM... WHAT DO YOU EXPECT WOULD OCCUR?

Again, there is no throne... God is enthroned above the mercy seat. There was a time however when the throne was seen....

CONTEXT: At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, the Jewish Nation is a divided Kingdom

- **Israel** in the North with its capital in **Samaria**
- **Judah** in the South with its capital in **Jerusalem**

UZZIAH REIGN - Judah had anointed a 16 year old young man as King named **Uzziah**. Uzziah's reign began really well. 2 Chronicles tells us that he did was was right in the eyes of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 26:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

2 Chronicles 26:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ ...his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped,

Note that phrase marvelously helped... when someone asks me how things are going at First Baptist Church, I can't think of a better way to describe it. We are marvelously helped. God has done and is doing more than we could ask or think.

Oh but God forbid the terrible fate that befell Uzziah...

2 Chronicles 26:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ ...his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, *till he was strong.*

The curse of strength. That awful malady that causes one to forget his utter dependance on the Lord.

- That cancer of the soul that makes the branch think it can bear fruit apart from the vine.
- Some of you today made WEAK by age, others by affliction, and we pray for you to that God would deliver you... for this was not His original intent. Yet the fact is, you are much safer than those among us who are strong... you remember your need, your recognize your dependancy.. but strength often leads to pride, and pride goes before destruction.

2 Chronicles 26:16–19 (ESV)

¹⁶ But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

There were three offices in the OT. Prophet, Priest, and King. It was very important that you didn't presume upon an office that had not been granted you. This was the sin of Saul and why God took the Kingdom from him. Certainly, this memory haunted every King of Israel. But strength, security has a way of dulling the memory.

Uzziah thought, well if anyone other than a PRIEST was worthy to enter the Holy Space and offer incense.. it was the KING. He makes his way toward the Temple...

2 Chronicles 26:17–19 (ESV)

¹⁷ But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, ¹⁸ and they withstood King Uzziah...

Oh friend, there is safety in a multitude of counselors. But when we are proud, not only can we not remember the PAST we can't listen in the PRESENT. 80 men of valor withstood him. Speaking truth to power, but power would not hear.

¹⁹ Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense.

This strong proud man, died a Leper. Banished from the House of God.

It was then that the PROPHET ISAIAH sought the Lord. Isaiah was granted the offices of both Priest and Prophet. So he had the right of approach.

His travels passed ...

- The **Brazen Altar** - Where the substitutionary sacrifice was made.
- Past the **Water Laver** - There he washes, remembering his need for present grace
- As he continues into the Holy Space, he sees the **7 branch Candlestick** He senses the presence of another unseen person - the Holy Spirit.
- He smells the fresh bread, the bread of presence there on the table. The aroma reminds him that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father.

- At that point the aroma of the bread mixes with that of sweet spices burning upon the **The Alter of Incense** - reminding him that he is entering the King's presence. Also, reminding him of the horrific consequences of Uzziah's sin. He looks down at his hand to see if he would suffer the same fate. He proceeds...
- A thin curtain separated Isaiah from the INNER SANCTUM. What lies behind that curtain would change Him and would change History.
- He pushes the curtain aside, expecting to see the ARK of the COVENANT. It's there in all of its glory... but REMEMBER - the ARK is the footstool. The throne is not repressed in the tabernacle... that is... until now.

Isaiah 6:1–8 (ESV)

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw **the Lord sitting upon a throne**, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isaiah sees the TRUE King of Israel, to which all other kings were mere shadows and types. The Ancient of Days.

² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Seraphim - the mighty guardians of the throne room of God. It is as if Isaiah invites you to imagine. 6 wings. Two for head covering, two for feet covering, two for flying.

³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

So much we could say here, but I want you to notice the essence of the proclamation. Holy, Holy, Holy. We've said before, there was not punctuation in the Hebrew. So this was the equivalent of **underlining, bold print, all caps, multiple exclamation points**.

Holy, Holy, Holy... what does that mean?

Is it simply saying God is Ethical, Ethical, Ethical? Or Moral, Moral, Moral?

No, it's more than that - and you can get the sense of that from Isaiah's response.

⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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!"

The Holiness of God speaks of

- HOLINESS SPEAKS OF - His **Metaphysical Emanation** - the very light that proceeds from God that magnifies all that is profane and unholy. Surly Isaiah was aware of his sin before, but not like now. Something about God's presence magnifies the stain of sin.
- HOLINESS SPEAKS OF - His **Terrifying Authority to Judge** - we are told in another place that at the Revelation of God's Holiness, "Earth and Sky fled away but no place was found for them".

What is Isaiah's response to the revelation of God's Holy Person - "WOE IS ME, I AM UTTERLY RUINED".

This was the response of the disciples any time Jesus allowed His glory to spill over.

- The Mount of Transfiguration - Matthew 17:6 (ESV) ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.
- When Jesus calmed the Storm - Mark 4:41 (ESV) ⁴¹ they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Isaiah is gripped with paralyzing fear.

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

What a reminder!! That coal didn't atone for his sin... It reminded him that his sin was atoned for.

Have you ever burned your tongue? You burn it one time and whatever burnt it, you will not soon taste a second time...

ILLUSTRATION: We smoked our turkey for thanksgiving. When I took it out of the smoker, I sat the drippings on the ground. Our Labrador retriever runs over and licks it. One time, it burnt his tongue and he didn't offer to sample another taste for the rest of the day.

Even the prophet needed a reminder that his sin was atoned for. Sometimes we forget. Perhaps today you are saved, but your conscience is stirred under the preaching of God's holiness. If you have believed in Lord Jesus Christ, I'm here to remind you... He is still enough!

Imagine now, Isaiah there in the presence of Almighty God, alive, welcome, at peace.

Isaiah 6:8 (ESV)

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

We are told that there is a BOLDNESS that only the Righteous possess. The righteous are bold as lions... but the wicked flee even when no one is pursuing.

Isaiah, boldly places his name for consideration. I'll go he says. Not even sure of where he is being sent. But it doesn't matter. You get in the presence of God, and you'll go anywhere He wants.

That's the point, my friend - that's why we've done this series.

THE GOAL OF PRAYER IS PRESENCE

- **PARENTING** - There are times, that as a father I am terribly afraid. There is so much that I need to teach my children and the time is short. But, if I can get them into God's presence... everything else will take care of itself.
- **COUNSELING** - When I'm working with a couple trying to save their marriage. Can I be honest. There are some questions, I just can't answer. I've had times when I thought, "Honey, I'd leave him too". What is a Pastor to do? Get them into God's presence.

Mark Batterson - the Plans of God are only revealed in the Presence of God.

- **DEATH** - I remember when my father was near death. His Sunday school class came and gathered around his bed and sang Hymns. I was frustrated, aggravated, I thought to myself... he doesn't need songs right now, you all don't even sing that well. But now I know... what he needed was the presence of God. Why? When you are in God's presence - the fear of God delivers you from the fear of death.

Alexander McClaren - Peace comes not from the absence of trouble, but from the presence of God.

Whatever you think your biggest challenge is, your biggest problem... let me show you what it really is - your biggest problem is distance from God.

- **STRONG?** Perhaps, like Uzziah, you are strong! The only thing that will remind you that you aren't strong enough is to get into God's presence.

The presence of God shall be the priority in your day.

**Draw near to God, He WILL draw near to you. But it begins with you!
You must initiate. You must pursue.**

The biggest problem you have in your life is directly related to the lack of God's presence.

Are you DEPRESSED?

Psalm 16:11 ESV "You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence there is fullness of joy**; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Acts 3:19-20 ESV

"Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, **that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...**"

Are you TIRED?

Exodus 33:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

SONG -

In the presence of Jehovah
God Almighty, Prince of peace
Troubles vanish, hearts are mended
In the presence of the King