

S.N. April 25, 82 A.M.

"WHERE DOES GOD LIVE?"

Isaiah 57:15

I would like to read a verse of Scripture, perhaps not new to you from the book of Isaiah - Chapter 57. Now this chapter seems to be part of a series of sermons preached by the Prophet. And they were messages given during the period of his ministry, in the city of Jerusalem and surrounding area.

They reveal Isaiah -- his great insight, not just as a poet. But that he has ability through (pictures) to give revelations of God, to his people. And he is trying to preach God for these desperate people.

In V. 15 He gives us very special insight - that really is not new in this passage, but it is one of those themes that really captivates your mind. Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabited eternity. Whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and the holy place, with himself also, that is of a contrite and a holy spirit, humble spirit - to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

When Elvis Presley died a few years ago, there were a lot of different ways in which the news covered, concerning the reaction of the people, who really loved him and the people who had (made him a God). One of those people was a man of whom the press wrote quite a bit. They wrote a lot about (Dennis Wise). As one who was under the influence of Elvis - he lived in (Florida). And he really loved him so much - so that, not only after Presley died, he had his face lifted - as they say, by a plastic surgeon. And his hair contoured - and he took on the appearance and looked remarkably similar to Elvis. In fact, for a few months, he made a dollar or two by

appearing where people could interview him. And they could ask a man what was it that could drive you to reshape your face, to look like Elvis. He had been his model, and his idol for many years.

Now the Boston Globe said that Presley had been an idol of his for over - since he was five years old. He said, I have a record, every record he has made, twice over. Pictures in the thousands, books, magazines, pillows. A couple of books in Chinese and Japanese about him. I have tree leaves from the front of his house. And by the way, he could have all of these in front of my house. I would be glad to give them to him. Wise went on to say -- I never saw Elvis Presley. I saw him on the stage four times. Once, I tried to run up to the stage. And I once stood on the wall of the Presley mansion, and tried to see him. For 12 hours I stood trying to get a glimpse of him. But he had so many people around him, that you could never get close.

Now, as I read those words - I have a suspicion that those are the kind of words that one reserves for the worship of God. The reshaping of one's face. Now the Gospel talks about being conformed to the image of Christ. Saving momentos - every scrap, every hint of the man's presence. As if one is worshipping a God. And the most tragic words of that article from the Globe we might say, are these -- I never got close to him. I never saw him. I never knew him.)''

The uniqueness of the Christian Gospel - that people can have an experience with the everlasting God. And that is what confounds the unbeliever. That we can know God. That in a real sense, we can become acquainted with God.

Our God is alive. And one does not need to stand behind a 12 foot wall, or buy a \$15-\$20 ticket to watch him perform on the stage. Now that is one of the most precious truths of the reality of the Gospel. In the Old Testament times, the prophet Isaiah saw God in this verse as very revealing.

Now the key word or two in our verse are worth circling. That is, if the Bible you have is your own. The words I dwell. The child asks the parent - Daddy, Mama, where is God. Where does he live. And here Isaiah is giving us some good, significant answers. When he speaks of God. He quotes God as saying - I live, or I dwell...

How shall one talk about this verse. The first thing you might want to say about it - I dwell - does speak about the fact that our God is alive.

That he is a person - that he is alive today.

And he is not like the idols that people have, and they fall down too. This God is alive.

There was a man in Southern Italy, a few years ago who suffered a stroke. He talked about throwing \$50 - his last savings, before a statue of the local church and said - I prayed, and I gave, and I wept. But there was no answer.

Now the God we are talking about is one that dwells and is alive, and even more. He tells us where his dwelling place is.

Isaiah quotes God in this prophecy of revelation and says that God can be found in a couple of places. Here is an exposition that is broken down into two basic themes. God lives in a high and a holy place. For the Scripture notes that God can be found in a lofty place. And the prophet goes on to say, by one little word also, he dwells with the people of contrite humble spirits. That leads us to say that in reality, he dwells in a lowly place. A lofty place, a lowly place. Two great locations where God can be found. And we spend a lot of our time observing people. But it never occurs to us - where can God be found. Really, we do not appreciate what it means to worship God in a lofty fashion. Some of our spiritual dynamics today - people do not appreciate the fact that God is holy. They find it convenient not to find him up there - but they want a middle ground. Well, God may not be found in some of the places that people are looking for him today.

Let me say two or three things first about God here - before we talk farther about where he lives.

First, God is omnipotent. I am the Almighty God. Gen. 17:1. Many times he is called Almighty. We find that in Job 26:7 - he stretched out the North over the empty place.

Isaiah 40:22 - And he stretches out the Heavens as a curtain.

Job 26:7 - And he hangth the earth up on nothing.

Isaiah 40:12 - He hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand - comprehe

the dust of the earth in a measure. And weighed the mountains, scales, and the hills in balances. God is unlimited to the extent of Divine power. He is able to say and to do all things.

Second, God is (omniscient). That is, he has knowledge and he gets his knowledge not from reasoning but from being God. Psalm 94:11 - the Lord knowth the thoughts of man.

Isaiah 46:9-10 - He says, remember the former things of old - for I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning - and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

There is a third, God is (omnipresent).

Jer. 23:24 - Can any hide himself in a secret place - that I shall not see him, saith the Lord. Do not I fill the Heaven and the earth - saith the Lord.

Psalm 139:7 - Whether shall I flee from thy presence, if I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in Hell, behold, thou art there. And if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utter most parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me. And thy right hand shall hold me.

God is everywhere - has excess to all places. And is exempt from limitations of

space, the actual nearness of God is here portrayed for us. Now this will help us as we look into the matter of where God lives.

One rarely meets God at the end of an argument. Or at the conclusion of somebody reciting his own virtues. Job had trouble finding God - he did not find God through the correctness of his belief. He did not find God through sorrow, although he might have. If his friends had let him alone. But the place that Job found God was at the point of his deepest need. He found God when he was unable either to do for himself in his own moral strength, and at the end of all of that - he discovered God.

Let us look and see what is suggested here in this text for our good today. First, God dwells in a lowly place. And second, God dwells in a lofty place.

I. GOD DWELLS IN A LOFTY PLACE

Isaiah suggests here the word "lofty" is an translation that suggests that our God has majesty and power, and is above us. Of course, in those days of Isaiah's world, the number one being in his case was King. Now the King always sat above the level of where people sat. And everybody else was lower than the King. The King was in an elevated position.

Now Isaiah was deeply concerned that the people of his generation get back on track. In their understanding of God, as being in a lofty position. A place of power and majesty.

Now if you think about his comment here, you will discover three or four things that Isaiah had to say. First of all, beginning in that early part of V. 15 - God is (high and lofty). I have talked about that point. And secondly, you will discover that our God (inhabits eternity). And (third, he says, our God is one whose (name is holy). These are three incredible, difficult concepts for my little mind to fully grasp. In fact, it is so difficult sometimes, for me to grasp - that I must confess that I have to start in the early stages. And (we) might say, well now, these things are impractical. But (we) sing our old hymns of faith. And they made a difference. My own Christian life struggles on and I seem to know the everlasting God. More deeply and more intimately. I have discovered that the dimensions that I have missed all too often, is the significance of really those (three) realities about God. It is a break through really. In one's spiritual struggle to realize that all too often (we) have brought God down to the (middle ground). To put it another way, we have (taken) God out of his lofty place - at least in our minds. Because it is too difficult for us to imagine him being up there.

Dr. A. W. Tozer, in his book, The Knowledge Of The Holy - he said this. The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God. And has substituted for it, one so low, so ignoble, it has to be utterly unworthy of thinking worshipping men. This, the church, has not done deliberately. (But) little by little, and without her knowledge, and her unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic.

He goes on to say, the low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. He says, a whole new philosophy of Christian life has resulted. Over this (one) basic error in our religious thinking. And with our (loss) of the sense of his majesty, comes the further loss of religious awe. We have lost our spirit of worship.

We have lost our ability to meet God in adoring silence.

Modern Christianity, (Tozer), wrote - some I think about 15 or 20 years ago - it is simple not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience life in the Spirit. The words, be still and know that I am God, mean next to nothing to the self-confident, hustling, bustling worshipper.

Now this really shakes your mind up. Then we go right back into the roots of Isaiah 57:15 - in which he is saying to those who will listen, our God dwells in lofty places. His majesty is go incredible, the mind cannot contain it. We must only bow down before it.

Here is another quote from Dr. A. W. Pink - he is a great Bible expositor. How different, he says, about the sovereignty of God. Which you really have to work at hard to get through. How different is the God of the Bible, from the God of modern times. The conception of deity, which prevails, is mostly widely spread today. Even those who profess to give heed to the Scriptures. Is a miserable blasphemy and error of truth.

The God of the 20th Century is a helpless, effeminate - that really commands no respect of man. The God of the popular mind is the creation of a model - sentimental, rather than all-inspiring reverence.

Another thing that he says about this first thing - about the high and lofty place - he says, he is frightened by the words. That he illustrates in some of the

hymns. That we have so frequently and unthinkingly sung. Some of these songs he says, that are used in church music today simply picture God as a best friend. A kindly old grandfather type, who lives in the apartment upstairs. And who really does not intrude too much into our lives because he is too kind. He is too full of love.

Isaiah says, our God dwells in high and lofty places. And he said to Jerusalem, get it straight. That is where God lives.

Second, He goes on to say - our God dwells in eternity. That he is not bound by time or things. Now this is an incredible problem for me. Time is my worst enemy unless I use it properly, unless I discipline myself.

But our God dwells above time. Isaiah has in his lifetime watch four Kings come and go. Some of them had died miserable ways. But his God is above death. And his God is unlimited and unbounded by those things. He is a great God. He dwells in eternity. Not in time - but in eternity. (That is where God lives).

Third, God is one whose name is holy. Finally Isaiah says, that word "holy" is a special word with him. All the way through the book - 60 and more chapters. God is a holy one. Holy, the high and holy one. More than 40 times it becomes as he says.

Why is it so important for Isaiah to say these things. What can I say to you -

because in his lifetime, he had watched human power fail so miserably. If you went back in your Bibles to Isaiah (6) - he gives you his spiritual biography. There, he got his start.

He starts by saying in the year that King Azariah died - I saw the Lord high and lifted up. There is the high and lofty concept again.

And he says his trane filled his temple above where stood the Seraphims - each one had six wings - and with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet. And they did say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. What a hymn. I think Isaiah is telling us something at the beginning and at the end of his book - that over and over again - that overwhelms us. There is the holiness of God. What does that word mean. How does one grasp it. Does it just pass it off lightly. Is it just an analogy. When the angel sang holy, holy, holy - is the Lord of hosts. Did they have any concept of what one might think of the brilliant one. You cannot look at the sun without destroying your eyes. And here is the holiness of God. So absolute perfect, unstained, untainted.

But the angels go on to say that the earth is full of his glory. And could it be that the glory of the Lord is much like the rays of the sun. Though one cannot look at it - we can at least look at it and enjoy its warmth and light. And even be drawn - or even draw from its energy. Now we can rejoice and abound in the reflected glory that comes from a holy and a lofty God.

But the bottom line - when we begin to think and recognize how absolutely

unapproachable is our own, a holy God - how he actually is.

Maybe Isaiah rustled with that concept. Of lofty. And he saw something.

For example, the great King Asahiah - who reigned upon the throne of Jerusalem for 50 years. Who had a great record of building up the city and the walls. Reorganizing the Army. Building the economy - everybody loved Asahiah - until the book of 2 Chronicles 26 says he grew proud to his destruction. He walked into the temple and presumed to grasp the ceremonial instruments to approach the presence of God at the altar, on his own. And the Bible says, at that moment when he presumed to do such a prideful thing, God struck him with leprosy.

And I wonder if in Isaiah's theology, when he thought about the holiness of God, he thought about the encounter of the King. Who literally acted out of unholiness and took upon himself. What happens when an unholy man attempts to come into the presence of a holy God in his own right.

If I am right in my observation here in this passage, there ought to be a growing holy fear in my own spirit. For like Asahiah, I also have the ability of pride, of being a person of pride. And how often do I fear that I enter the sanctuary of worship. And the blessed word of God, and presume to walk in the presence of God. As if it were my perfect right apart from his grace.

Is it possible that many of us have our own doctrine so perfected, we think

our knowledge of the Bible is so deep and so wide, that we are guilty of forgetting the awesomeness of coming before God who dwells in a lofty place, whose name is holy, and who inhabits eternity. And we think that it is just our right to do so.

The thing that terrified Moses in the book of Deut. and the children of Israel crossing over into Canaan. Chapter 4:9-10 - that they would forget the works of God and they would not fear him. Where is the message of the honest, awesomeness of God in this 20th Century.

Where are the congregations that gather together on Sunday morning and sit in silence and contemplate the presence of the high and the lofty God. Where is the woman or the man who trembles at the very thought. I wonder if Tozer would write, have we lost it.

The story of Alfred Smith, the Governor of New York, was prevailed on to speak at a Convention Dinner. They were an out-of-state audience, and they thought that Alfred Smith was some kind of a joke. And this insight of thinking verified what the Postmaster gave as he introduced the Governor. He said, now (boys) I give you a great (guy), (Al Smith).

Governor Smith was the last guy in the world to go for empty formalities. But he sensed it an affront to his office and to his heritage and he made a brief point of it. He said, gentlemen, when I was a little boy on the East side, my father took me to a great civic parade. I held his hand tightly as battalion after battalion marched by. I danced up and down with the music. And then suddenly my father, stiffened and I almost felt some pride and thrill through his being.

Swiftly, he said, son take off your hat. The Governor of New York is passing by. I took off my hat. "Gentlemen, the Governor of New York, bids you Good Night." And he walked out the door.

Now it is really sacreligious to picture God as one to walk out on a congregation who wants to meet him on middle ground, in a comfortable place, rather than a fear some place of benefit.

Some have made God too much like a friend - so that he is no longer our God. I think I hear Isaiah trying to beat a drum for the spirits of the people of Jerusalem that they had better not monkey around with the Everlasting God. Because his name is holy. Where does God live - Isaiah told them he lives and dwells in a high and lofty place.

Now on the last part of this verse, is the part that I think really ought to touch your life. And I think it ought to do something for you. For here is a Christian experience - when I want to meet God, on middle ground where I am at home. That means, I prefer not to see him in a lofty place. I do not want to see him in a holy place.

II. GOD LIVES IN A LOW PLACE

First, in a contrite and humble spirit. This word contrite describes someone who is crushed. And is a descriptive word - humble and contrite. I understand what they mean when they say crushed. I feel what that means. Now I have been crushed many times, disappointed, etc. And I imagine you have been crushed emotionally and

physically, and even spiritually.

Where will you find God. He is not only - he not only says God is found in a majestic place. But he says, that God may be found in a place among crushed people. Who are the crushed people. Obviously those who have come to grips with the simpleness of their own being. Isaiah 6 - He heard the cry - holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. The house is full with smoke. He said, Whoe is me, for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. Mine eyes have seen the King, Lord of Hosts.

Now that is a very instructive statement - because Isaiah is telling us that throughout his early life he had really never seen himself until he had seen the glory of the majesty of the holy God. When he had come to grips with the great dimensions of God, he became so crushed and aware of how low he really was. Whoe, is me, he cried out.

What does that word ~~Whoe~~ mean. Literally, it has something to do with the idea of rejection. It means to be (put down)

Isaiah 6:3-5, when I saw who God was, I suddenly realized that according to his creation, and his design - how he meant for men and women really to be. I have fallen short of God's specifications. I don't live up to it. I am a man of unclean lips. And while I used to be somewhat happy with myself, I am not uncomfortable. And I recognize in my contrite spirit, that I need to respond to the Glory of God.

Although God dwells in a lofty place, he has apparently committed himself to engage in the presence of people who are honest enough to acknowledge that they have a contrite spirit. I think what I am trying to say to you is -- there will be no worship experience, that will be very genuine unless there is a sense of contrition. That part of your experience in the presence of the Holy God - that I am nothing unless I am bathed in his mercy, if it were not for the cross of Jesus Christ - I would still remain in the state of whoe. And I cannot depend upon my own intimacy and talking with God.

You remember that passage in the book of Revelation 3 - the angel came, and he was talking to the church at Laodicea. I know thy works - you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were something. So because you are neither one - I am about to spew thee out of my mouth. You say, I am rich. I am prosperous. I need nothing. You are wretched, you are pitiful. What an interesting contrast. You say these things, but I know these things.

What is the problem. There was no awareness of contrition. And God was saying, in effect, to that church - ladies and gentlemen, as long as you are not ready to come to grips with your own spirit of selfishness - I will not inhabit your presence. You won't find me there. You can do all of your religious things. You can fast. But my presence is found where there is a contrite spirit.

Is it possible that in the 1980's, the church will be doing it's thing with excellence and beauty, but God will not be there.

C. R. Sumner, in 1820-21, was given the opportunity to be the Chaplain of King

George IV of England. One day he walked into the throne room to serve the King communion. It was a daily occurrence. And, when he got into the presence of the King, he found the King outraged. Furious. He was beraving a servant. And he was using bad words. Now from the history book it says, finding the King storming at the servant, C. R. Sumner told him plainly that he did not seem to be in a fit state to receive communion. That he must learn to restrain his passion. And must show his forgiveness by re-instating the servant. And at this point, the young Chaplain requested permission to retire. To enable his majesty to think over the matter. And he was re-admitted and told the servant should be restored. And he urged the King, that he should not receive communion alone, but with the rest of the household including the servant. For a time, the King held out, but at last he consented and knelt at the holy table. With the household and with the servant.

Now, that took courage. And I don't know whether I would have had that much courage. But it is nice to read about C. R. Sumner - his recognition enters before the holy table if there has not been a humble and a contrite spirit and things have not been made right.

God dwells then with those of a contrite spirit.

Second, those of a humble heart. When Jesus was born in the stable, among those peasant people, he dwelt in that humble place. And then he went among the synagogue teaching, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. To liberate the captives, the touch the poor, to feed the hungry.

And when he walked through Jericho, he was stopped by a blind man who was crying

for help. And Jesus helped him.

He also stopped at a sycamore tree, and spent a few hours at lunch with Zacchaeus. A man who was ready to acknowledge that he had a contrite, humble spirit.

When God said to Moses, I have come down among my people, and have heard their cry and seen their affliction. That tells us that God always draws near in mercy among those who are humble and of a contrite spirit.

Are there Christians today who can walk through the streets of our city, pay no pity to the humble and the contrite, the starving. And the millions across the world - have we no tears for those in need. God is always very sensitive.

Some of us find it better to remain in the middle ground. Much easier for us not to get enthusiastic.

It is easier for some people to go to a enthusiastic rock 'n roll service - where there is a lot of talk and very little theology. And by-pass their own need of acknowledging a contrite and a humble heart.

It is tragic. But we need to know that we'll never get close to the place where God dwells. Where can he be found - in the high and the lofty. And in the humble.

W. E. Sangster, a Methodist minister, years ago - he was comfortable about some of the things and thought that he knew God. In his journal September 18, 1930, he was a young man struggling to find his place in the ministry. I am a minister of God, and yet he said - in my private life I am a failure. I am easily put out. Second, I am impatient with my wife and children. Third, I am deceitful - in that I often express private annoyances.

From an examination of my heart, I concluded that most of my study had been really ambitious for myself. That I wanted degrees, I wanted knowledge, and I wanted praise. Rather than equipment for service. Even in my preaching he says, I fear I am more often wondering what people will think about me, than what my Lord and his Word will think. I have long felt in a vague way that something was hindering the effectiveness of my ministry.

No wonder when this man figured out what it was that God touched him and touched other lives. And he found out where God lived - and he lived in that experience of worship.

Bruce Dunn, that great preacher, has said I do not believe in (walking) down a church aisle. And I will handle this in (my own) way. Between God. He had some sort of feeling about walking down the aisle. He was never saved - until he got to the place where he had a conviction - Lord, I'll go to some church and I'll do summer-salts down the aisle if necessary. But God saved him before he got to church. But here is the indication and the miracle took place when he discovered where God lived.

Heart -
" on mine -
" on back in x -
H.S. " " " you - hands - heart -