

# In the Throne Room ■ The God of Holiness and Hope

by John Piper

---

*This sermon delves into the profound vision of Isaiah seeing the Lord seated on a throne, high and lifted up, revealing God's holiness, authority, omnipotence, resplendence, reverence, and glory. It explores how Chuck Colson and Job experienced a transformative understanding of God, emphasizing the importance of recognizing God's infinite value and supremacy. The sermon connects Isaiah's vision to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of both majesty and suffering, highlighting the rejection of God's glory by those who seek human approval over God's approval.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1, John 12:43, Romans 11:25, Romans 11:33

**Topics:** "God's Holiness", "The Majesty of Christ"

---

## Description

This sermon delves into the profound vision of Isaiah seeing the Lord seated on a throne, high and lifted up, revealing God's holiness, authority, omnipotence, resplendence, reverence, and glory. It explores how Chuck Colson and Job experienced a transformative understanding of God, emphasizing the importance of recognizing God's infinite value and supremacy. The sermon connects Isaiah's vision to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of both majesty and suffering, highlighting the rejection of God's glory by those who seek human approval over God's approval.

---

## Transcript

Father in heaven, I pray that you would come and that you would catch us up, that you would grant us some measure to see what Isaiah saw. In the year the king Isaiah died, I saw the Lord seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 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.

And one cried to the other, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook, and the house was filled with smoke.

Lord Jesus, you died that we might see this vision and count it, feel it as our unfathomable delight. Would you work that in these women? Would you work that? Make your majestic self their unfathomable delight. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

June 1st, 1973, Chuck Colson, who just passed away in April, heard the gospel for the first time from Tom Phillips. All the while, Watergate was exploding. He was the special counsel to President Nixon.

That night, he said, I cried out to God and found myself drawn irresistibly into his waiting arms. That was the night I gave my life to Jesus Christ and began the greatest adventure of my life. Several years later, Chuck Colson repented of a very inadequate view of God.

He said it was a very dry season, and a friend suggested to him that he watch a videocassette series by R.C. Sproul called The Holiness of God. And here's what he wrote. By the end of the sixth lecture, I was on my knees, deep in prayer, in awe of God's absolute holiness.

It was a life-changing experience as I gained a completely new understanding of the holy God I believe in and worship. Now that has happened to many people. A completely new understanding of God, though already saved with an inadequate view of God.

It will happen at this conference. It happened to Job. Do you remember how the book begins? He was blameless and upright, one who feared God, turned away from evil.

I mean, what more could you want? He was the best man in the land. And then, because God is merciful according to James' interpretation of Job, suffering broke over his life like a tidal wave and he wrestled with God for chapter after chapter until God speaks to him. Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Can you thunder with a voice like mine? Deck yourself with majesty and dignity.

Clothe yourself with glory and splendor. Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. And Job joined Chuck Colson in a completely new grasp of God.

And he said, therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee and therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. It happened to Job and it happened to Isaiah.

After that vision, in verses 1 to 4, and I do invite you to open your Bibles to Isaiah 6 if you haven't already. After that vision in verses 1 to 4, verse 5, and I said, woe is me, for I'm lost, for I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh, of hosts. It happened to me between the ages of 22 and 25, Pasadena, California.

A new understanding of God saved when I was six. A taste for the majesty of God that has never, ever gone away and did not exist in the same way before. And my prayer is that God will do it for you as we look together at this vision.

I pray that He will give you a taste for His majesty. I am sorry that so many of you have grown up in homes, unbelieving homes, nominal homes, and you go to churches, some of you, where things are so light-hearted and so glib and so shallow. I'm sorry about that.

I would like your life to count for the healing of that silliness. So there is a sense of awe and wonder that is the happiest seriousness in the world. In the year the King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated upon a throne high and lifted up.

The train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings.

With two, they covered their face. With two, they covered their feet. With two, they flew.

One cried to the other, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook, and the house was filled with smoke.

Seven glimpses of God in these four verses. Number one, God is alive. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.

The King is dead. God is not. From everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

The living God. He was alive forever when this universe exploded into existence. He was alive when Socrates drank his poison.

He was alive when William Bradford ruled over the Plymouth Colony. He was alive in 1966 when Thomas Altizer said, God is dead. And Time Magazine absolutely, absurdly put it on their front page.

And He will be alive in ten trillion ages of years when all of those who have lifted their squeaky voices against Him are obliterated like beebees in the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. He is alive, and He will be alive forever. All the potentates that are on their little thrones today, in fifty years, will be no more in those offices.

The seven billion people that are alive on planet earth will experience a complete turnover in a hundred and twenty years, and God will be alive. He is alive. Think of it.

Forever. Never having come into being. Never going out of being.

Our God is alive. Glimpse number one. Number two.

God is authoritative. I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. There has never been a vision of God in heaven plowing a field, cutting his grass, shining shoes, filling out reports, or loading a truck.

And heaven is not coming apart at the seams for inattention. He is sitting in complete composure and on a throne. God is never at wit's end.

With His heavenly realm, He sits. And He is in complete authority. The throne signifies His right to rule the world.

You don't give God authority in your life. He has it. Totally.

You can either pretend He doesn't and perish, or you can own it with joy. He has, in the universe, absolute authority. Sometimes our little vaunted fist-shakings need some strong words to be put in their place.

And Virginia Stem Owens, who interestingly Tim also quoted, has some very strong words. And I will dare. Let us get this one thing straight.

God can do anything He damn well pleases, including damn well. And if it pleases Him to damn, then it is done ipso facto well. God's activity is what it is.

There isn't anything else. Without it, there would be no being, including human beings presuming to judge the Creator of everything that is. I like women like that.

I'm here because I want women like that. Rocks in their churches. No tomfoolery here.

We know our God. We know where we want our children to grow up to be and believe. How we want them to stand.

God has authority and we revel in it. We don't play games with this. We don't question Him.

We don't criticize Him. We don't call Him into question or shake our fist at Him. We may weep with utter perplexity if He takes our child, breaks our husband, but we won't rebel against our King.

Few things are more humbling. Few things give us a sense of God's majesty like the truth that He is utterly authoritative. He is the Supreme Court of the universe, the legislature, the chief executive officer.

Behind Him, no appeal. Glimpse number three. God is omnipotent.

The throne of His authority is not one among many. It is high. I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, meaning over every other throne and thus superior in power, superior in authority, superior in rule and control over every other throne.

It is high and lifted up. It's not just an authority. It is an authority with supremacy of rule, supremacy of power and control.

My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose, Isaiah 46.10. He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay His hand or say to Him, what are you doing? Daniel 4.35. This omnipotent God, this absolutely authoritative and sovereign omnipotent God is a refuge for holy women who hope in God and experience tsunamis of pain. And I have loved them in my church.

I have loved to watch them for 32 years. Get them. Few things give a pastor more pleasure than to watch his people be steadfast in suffering because they have a place to stand.

Unshakable, holy, sovereign, authoritative, good, perplexing. How many have told me over the years, had we not heard this news, we would have gone insane. Glimpse number four.

God is resplendent. I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and His train filled the temple. So He has a robe and it has a train.

You've seen brides, you've been brides, and some more in past days than presently, I suppose, have incredible trains so that when the photographer does the pictures, they take a half an hour to arrange the train. And it flows down over the steps and up onto the platform. You've all seen them.

Well, picture it flowing down the aisle, covering all the pews, going into the choir loft, up over the balcony. And when I preached on Isaiah 6 about 20 years ago, 30 years ago, I took it out the windows and over the skyscrapers in downtown Minneapolis and I said, so I challenge one of you, paint me a picture, do me a stitch work of the throne of God over Minneapolis with His train filling the city. And Jobe Morgan did.

It hung on our wall for years and years, a stitch work that she did, a needlework where she had the skyline of Minneapolis and the feet of the throne, you couldn't see it, and the legs of the one sitting upon the throne and the train of His robe covered the city. That's what we're supposed to feel. He is resplendent.

At the risk of another lollipop, I used to read Ranger Rick. You younger people don't even know Ranger Rick. In Ranger Rick, you can worship, even though they're crazy evolutionary, because they show the resplendent nature of God's creativity.

For example, this is the one I remember, it just, there are about a thousand different kinds of self-illuminating fish at the bottom of the ocean. And some of them have a little dangling lamp hanging out here in front like this, with a little light at the end of the lamp to attract food into the mouth. And some of them have a little lighted chin right here.

And some of them have beacons under their eyes that chin out little beams like this. And you wonder, where do they plug this in? How does, how can light be produced at the bottom of the ocean without any batteries? And why didn't the Lord just make one of those instead of a thousand? Because He is lavish in His beauty, lavish in His creativity, and lavish in His splendor. He is resplendent.

Glimpse number five. God is revered. 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. No one knows who these beings are.

They never show up again in the Bible under this name. But we better be careful how we conceive of them, because Rubens has probably not helped us with these fat little babies fluttering around the ears of God. It wasn't like that.

And I know it wasn't, because when one of them spoke the foundations of the universe, that's quite a voice. It didn't come out of a little fat Cupid's mouth. We grope for pictures of what it would mean for God to have in His presence beings who, when they speak, shake heaven.

But I remember as a boy, I asked Noelle last night if they still fly, and we didn't know. There was a team of four jets called the Blue Angels that flew in formation. I saw them in person just one time, and you know they're gonna arrive, and you don't know where they are.

And they suddenly appeared here, and must have broken the sound barrier right in front of us. It felt like several hundred yards away, and the lead plane going, what, six, seven hundred miles an hour, went straight up, vertical. I mean, not like that.

Straight up, and the others peeled off like that, just as they broke that barrier. And I thought, maybe it's like that. But the point is, these magnificent creatures cannot look directly upon God.

They take their wings, and they cover their face. And the shame that these are sinless beings. They've never fallen, and they're ashamed of their feet before this God.

So they can't see Him straight on, and they've got to cover their feet, and they're gonna keep moving around Him. God is revered. He is always revered.

Though we may look at this world and weep at how many millions give Him no reverence at all, God has seen to it. He will always be fittingly revered. With these blue angels of seraphim, day and night, doing what one ought to do always in life.

Glimpse number six. God is holy. What these beings are saying in this vision is, one call to another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

Language is pushing its limits with the word holy. What does holy mean? In one sense, when you're done trying to define holy, you have said God is God. But we should try.

The language was not used for nothing. Many of you have studied this, and you know that the the root meaning of this word holy is to cut, or to separate. So a holy thing is cut off from, or separated from, something else, and usually devoted to something else.

So the holiness of it consists in, it's not part of the common, it's not part of the profane, the impure, it's devoted unto God. So you read about holy ground, holy assemblies, holy sabbaths, holy nation, holy garments, holy city, holy promises, holy men, holy women, holy scriptures, holy hands, holy kiss, holy faith. Almost anything can be separated unto God, devoted to God, consecrated to God, separated from the common, the profane.

But, notice what happens when we try to apply this definition to God. Separated? Unto? The very Godness of God means He is separate from all He has made. There is an infinite qualitative difference between God and everything else that is.

All of that is made and dependent upon His second-by-second upholding it in being. He is who He is. What, Moses asked, shall I tell them is your name? Tell them I am who I am.

Tell them I am sent you. That's my essential being. I am and I'm not dependent on anything outside of me.

All of you are totally dependent on me. I'm not dependent on anything. I am separate, which in the end means we've said His holiness in this respect is His Godness.

And that's not wrong. That's the right thought. God is absolutely unique in this regard.

And the other side of holiness is holy things are devoted to something, not just cut off from, separated from. They're devoted to. What are you going to devote God to? There is nothing above God to which He should be devoted.

It's blasphemy to think that God's holiness consists in His conformity to something other than Himself. Which means if there's anything like holiness in the world, it is God. It just starts there.

That's what it is. God isn't good because He conforms to a law above Him. He wrote the law.

He's not holy because He keeps the rules. He made the rules. He's not holy because He keeps the law.

The law is holy because it reveals God. God is absolute. Everything else is derivative and dependent.

So what then did they mean? Holy, holy, holy, thrice holy. I think they meant, doing my best with language, His holiness is His utterly unique, one-of-a- class by Himself, pure essence, which therefore has infinite value. The more rare a diamond is, the more value it has.

And if there's only one of this kind, it's valuable. Just read in the news yesterday that one of George Washington's books sold for nine million dollars. And why would that be? There's only one of those.

There'll never be another one. You can't duplicate it. It's got his handwriting in it.

God is infinitely valuable, determining the value and the goodness and the truth of everything else. I can't think of anything that would have a greater impact in your life than for you to believe that. The most

important value in the universe is not you and not your family and not seven billion human beings and not billions upon billions of galaxies.

They are, we are, as nothing, a drop in the bucket compared to the value of God. And the main problem in the world is the failure to feel that. God is infinitely valuable.

He has infinite worth. All other value has value in proportion to its reflection of His value. It changes everything.

Absolutely. Chuck Colson waking up to a wholly new experience of God and a taste for His majesty. Job waking up.

Isaiah waking up. The 23-year-old John Piper waking up and experiencing a Copernican revolution where the value, the supremacy, the majesty of God goes square to the center of everything. There is no questioning anymore whether He has any rights.

We have none and we had none before we fell. Humans and angels don't have rights before their Maker. God is right and has all rights.

He defines right. He is right and holy. You will know that you have experienced something extraordinary when that is sweet.

I was talking with Tony just before and I said, you know if this conference is planned for another, they can do this again? And he didn't know when I asked him. I said, well if they do, I've got a title for the next one. So here it is.

You can find out whether I have any clout at all in this. The sovereignty of God and the sweetness of our Savior. That's my title for 2014.

No pressure, no pressure. I'm saying it here because I know when we speak of holiness, it feels very far away, very distant, very unexperientable. And I'm saying, yeah, you haven't gotten there yet.

It is sweet. And I'll try to make plain why in just a moment. One more glimpse.

God is glorious. He said He's holy and now the last glimpse is God is glorious. The silence that's coming, the shaking of the house, the all-concealing smoke that is going to descend upon the house.

Before that happens, these blue angels seraphim say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His, what word did He use? Why? Why didn't they say, holy, holy, holy? The whole earth is full of your holiness. Because, this is my best effort to understand, the glory of God in God's mind and Isaiah's mind and most places in Scripture, I believe, is the manifestation of the holiness of God.

God's holiness is His incomparable perfection, His intrinsic, infinite worth. When that goes public, when that goes on display, it's called in the Bible the glory of God. God is glorious means God's holiness has gone public.

His glory is the open revelation of the secret of His holiness. Here's Leviticus 10 3, I will show you myself, I will show myself holy among those who are near me and before all the people I will be glorified. I will show them my holiness and their response, glorious.

Because, in the move from the intrinsic, infinite, eternal worth and perfection and purity and transcendent wonder of God, in the movement out, what we see is the radiance of God and that's called glory in the Bible. The glory of God is the radiance of His holiness. When God shows himself holy, we see glory.

The holiness of God is concealed glory and the glory of God is revealed holiness. Now, end of my seven glimpses, last question. What does all of that have to do with Jesus Christ, incarnate Son of Man, co-eternal with the Father in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was this God.

This God has a name, Jesus. What does this vision have to do with the Jesus we meet in the Gospels who goes to the cross and dies for sinners and rises again that we may make this vision the unfathomable delight of our souls. And there is a place in the New Testament which blows my mind away with the way it applies what we have seen and it's John chapter 12 where John writing the most exalted story of Jesus quotes Isaiah 6 once and he quotes Isaiah 53 in the same context and I'm going to close by trying to explain to you what I think John is doing so that this vision will be not only majestic but sweet.

In verse 10 of Isaiah 6, Isaiah realizes he must take this vision and preach it with very bleak effect. The people will be hardened. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and blind their eyes.

So Isaiah is ready now. He's dedicated himself, acknowledging his sin, receiving the coal of purification. He's ready to go preach this vision and God says it's not going to go well.

This vision is going to make people very hard. It's going to have an effect on Israel like that. A hardening will come upon Israel.

But at the end of the chapter, as the tree is cut down, a stump of faithfulness remains. You see that at the end of verse 13? A stump remaining when the oak is felled and the holy seed, last phrase, the holy seed is its stump. What is that? There's a remnant and the remnant is going to flower.

The stump has been cut but something is going to happen and when you get to chapter 53, which you know so well, what do you see? I think you see the seed, the suffering servant despised and rejected by man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. So the description of the seed in chapter 53 of Isaiah, the picture of Christ is misery and suffering and nobody would have, he would look at him, he doesn't have any form or beauty that people would behold him. And so that chapter begins also with the bleak, who has believed our report? So you've got bleakness in chapter 6. Nobody's going to hear this exalted vision.

You've got bleakness in chapter 53. People aren't going to hear this suffering servant who lays down his life and takes the sins of Israel upon himself like a slaughtered sheep. They're not going to listen.

And in the Gospel of John, Jesus' public ministry ends at the end of chapter 12 and the rest is all about his talking to his disciples and dying. And as that chapter 12 draws the public ministry of Jesus to a close, John has to explain why haven't they believed? Why has there been such a hardness in Israel? Why is Jesus being rejected for who he is by the very leaders that he came to bring the kingdom to? And he uses Isaiah to answer his question. And he doesn't just use the verse 10 of chapter 6, which we would expect him to, he uses verse 1 of chapter 53.

No form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And they reject. People then rejected and here rejected.

So what's John trying to show us? He's trying to show us that Jesus is the fulfillment of this majestic vision in chapter 6 and he's the fulfillment of the suffering servant in chapter 53. And he has brought them together in his incarnate lowliness, making claims that I and the Father are one. And if you've seen me, you've seen the Father.

And yet presenting himself as a lowly suffering servant who gets down on his knees and washes his disciples feet and both of those are rejected. They don't want majesty and they don't want miserable lowly suffering. They don't want Isaiah 6 and they don't want Isaiah 53.

Why not? Why not? John answers this. Chapter 12 verse 43. The people loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

If I have any prayer for you, is that it would not be said of you. The women loved the glory of other women. You can tell by the way they dress.

They loved the glory of man more than the glory of God. Back in chapter 5 verse 43, Jesus said, how can you believe in me who received glory from man and do not receive the glory that comes from the only God? Faith in this Jesus is impossible for those who crave the approval of other people more than they crave knowing and enjoying the glory of God. You can't do it.

If you are so desperately needy that you live second-handedly off the glory of other people, women or men, you will look at this vision and it will repulse you and you will look at the miserable lowly serving Jesus and it will repulse you because both of them take your glory and decide whether you will love that glory or yours. That's the answer John gives to why in Isaiah's day and his day and I would say our day people don't love Isaiah 6 or Isaiah 53. They don't want an authoritative God over them and they don't want a suffering Savior that might imply they would have to take up their cross, follow him and get on their knees and wash somebody's feet.

They don't want either and Jesus was both. Which leaves one last observation. Was the reason Jesus was rejected ultimately the sin of man or was it the plan of God? The Son of Man came not to be served but to give his life as a ransom for many.

That's why he came. That's why the Trinity agreed with one another, the time is full son go do this great work of dying for our people. Which means you will be rejected.

That's the way it's going to go. We wrote the book that way. There are no detours between God's plan and God's accomplishment.

There are no wasted centuries. Every byway has a meaning. No suffering is without meaning and no rebellion is without meaning.

Will Israel be thrown away because they rejected their Messiah? Because this hardening came upon Israel. Will they be thrown away, this long covenant people? And Paul answers no. Romans 11 25, a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in and then in this way all Israel will be saved.

The nation will one day turn to her Messiah. So Romans 11 31 says, so Israel too has been disobedient, rejecting the God of Isaiah 6, rejecting the God of Isaiah 53, rejecting the Jesus who embodied both so humbly, so magnificently, so sweetly for us. So Israel too has been disobedient in order that mercy might

be shown to you Gentiles.

They also now, through the mercy shown to you, will be shown mercy. God isn't done with Israel or the nations. Things are right on schedule.

Which led Paul to end like this and so I'm going to end like this. You know how he ended. He came to this chapter 11, 9, 10, 11 of Romans looking at the strange and inexplicable ways of God in history and he says, oh the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways. Who has ever known the mind of the Lord or who has ever been his counselor? Who has ever given to him a gift that he should be repaid for from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory.

Yes, glory forever and ever. Father, I pray that before this conference is over, a Chuck Colson moment, a Job moment, an Isaiah 6 moment, a John Piper 1971 moment would be given so that your holiness would be their treasure. Your majesty mingled with your misery in Jesus and this sweet juxtaposition of majesty and mercy would become their refuge when the tidal wave breaks over their lives, which it will.

Make them strong with the strength of this vision I pray in Jesus name.

---

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/6rOtlzyj7IM.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/in-the-throne-room-the-god-of-holiness-and-hope/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**