

# God's rest in the humble heart- Rev James Maciver

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[0:00] If you would turn with me please now to Isaiah 66. Isaiah chapter 66 and the first two verses. We can just read through them once again.

Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. What is the house that you would build for me? And what is the place of my rest?

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

As we read through the prophecy of Isaiah, we're dealing with an individual called by the Lord to be a prophet toward his people in Judah and given an unenviable task.

Because the Lord made it clear to him, as you find from chapter 6, which we take as the call of Isaiah to be the Lord's prophet. The Lord made it clear to him at the beginning that his ministry was not going to be very productive.

[1:13] That the people were not going to be turned from their evil ways. And of course that is what happened, because they eventually ended up with so many others in Babylon, ended up as captives of the Babylonians.

And as Isaiah presented them with the truth of God, they constantly rejected that truth and sought to replace it with human wisdom.

And with the assurance, or the so-called assurance, that the false prophets gave them. There were many false prophets in Judah at this time as well, who were basically telling the people, Don't worry, what Isaiah is saying is not going to happen.

Don't listen to that kind of message, listen to us instead. And that's so true today, isn't it, as well.

People who reject the Bible, or certainly the elements of the Bible, that talk about God dealing with sin and God in the way he regards sin, the God who regards unrighteousness in a certain way of condemnation and judgment, all of these things.

Well, it's better to remove them from the Bible, people will say to you, and just leave us with the more comfortable parts. Well, you can't. You cannot understand or profit from the many comfortable passages in the Bible unless you first of all deal with those that are uncomfortable.

[2:46] You cannot yourself or myself come to appreciate the forgiveness of sin without coming to realize what sin really is, and the way that God tells us what his verdict is on sin.

So this is the kind of ministry, the kind of situation that Isaiah faced. And in these verses in chapter 6, where you have an account of his calling to be a prophet of the Lord, you'll find the Lord actually telling him about the kind of response the people would have.

I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send who will go for us? And I said, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and say to this people, Keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

In other words, Isaiah was going to be like Jeremiah after him also, a prophet who would bring forth the condemnation of the Lord, and make it clear why the Lord had these things against his people in Judah, his government people, although there was a remnant of believing, faithful people amongst them.

[4:02] And so his word would be comforting to them, even though it was despised and rejected by many of those who were actually listening to him. And then he said, Well, how long, O Lord?

How long will this be? How long must my ministry like this be? How long will it be before my sowing of the seed will bear some fruit?

And the Lord answered him, he said, Until the cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

There was Isaiah's situation. From the very outset of his calling to be a prophet, the Lord was saying to him, The seed that you are actually going to sow is going to fall on barren ground. You'll not see much return for your faithfulness to me, the Lord is saying to him.

And so the question at the beginning of chapter 66 fits in with that revelation earlier in the book of Isaiah, the question that God asks of them.

[5:13] Heaven, when he says, Heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool. What is the house that you would build for me? And what is the place of my rest? And he's challenging them through that to think about their relationship with himself.

What is it that makes for a proper relationship with God? What is the worship of God? What kind of worship does God require and insist upon? And that's what was being set before the people who would reject that message that God sent through his faithful prophet.

But the passage provides us with much that is of value to ourselves tonight, much that is applicable to our own generation, to our own circumstances in life today, in our own nation.

Here is the question that the Lord is asking people today in Scotland. What do you think of me? And if you reject me, what are you going to put in place of me?

And of course, that's already happened. And we'll see in the course of our study tonight that when you reject God and when you eject him from the throne of human hearts, you have to put someone in his place.

[6:26] It's never a vacuum. It's never just an empty place. If it's not God, then it's idols. And if it's idols, then we begin with ourselves and pleasing ourselves and worshiping ourselves.

So, two things. First of all, Isaiah is told here by the Lord to consider the greatness of God. God's greatness, both as King and Creator.

And then secondly, God's grace. And God's grace especially in choosing a residence for himself in the heart of those who will be humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Now, it doesn't actually say exactly that he's going to make a residence for himself there, but as we'll see, that's the logic of the verses as they run together. And that's really what God is saying through Isaiah.

If you're not going to have a resting place for me in your hearts or in the temple, where are you going to find a resting place for me? God's greatness as the King and Creator.

[7:34] Notice what he's saying here. Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. There is the King. There is similar to chapter 6.

You remember how chapter 6 began. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up.

And then it describes some other aspects of the sight that was given to Isaiah of the Lord enthroned in His majesty and in His sovereignty above the creation. But you do notice there's a great contrast there between two kings.

Between the earthly king Uzziah who just died, the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the King of kings sitting on the throne high and lifted up.

And the contrast is very deliberate because here is Isaiah saying to the people, this is what I saw, this is when it happened, in the year that King Uzziah died, and the year we lost our earthly king.

[8:35] What did I see? I saw the heavenly king. I saw the one who never dies. I saw the one who created us. The one who provides for us on a daily basis.

It's an illustration or a description of God sitting above the universe, above the creation. Notice how He puts it. Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

Think about the whole earth tonight. The vastness of the earth compared to ourselves. And yet here is God saying, it is my footstool. You know what a footstool is.

You sit down, you get comfortable in an armchair or wherever you're sitting and very often you'll pull up a footstool just to rest your feet on it. That's what God is saying the earth is to Him in the sense of its size, in its dimensions.

It's God's footstool. It's tiny compared to the universe in its entirety and especially in contrast to God Himself.

[9:42] And this is so important for us friends tonight that we know, come to know God as He really is. And as we come to the Bible, that's what we come across.

It doesn't matter where you go in the Bible where God describes Himself, that's how He really is. That's who He really is. That's what He's really like. To know God as He really is is what we lack until God brings us to know Himself by His grace and His salvation.

Because that's what we fell from, isn't it? We fell from that estate, from that state and condition in which God created us in fellowship with Himself. To know Him as He really is.

To be aware of Him as He really is. To worship Him as He really is. And as we sinned against God, so we fell from that state to a state of sinfulness and of misery.

And we still, throughout humanity, continue to reject God as He's revealed in the Scriptures or else to fashion a God for ourselves that is more like what we think we need.

[10:59] But you know, the world we live in has gone through, if you like, a set of levels of rejection of God. And it's important to actually see how that has happened in the course of history.

And we can say that our present situation is one, as you look out over what's happening in our own land and other parts of the world. We are what Carl Truman calls in a state of a world that glories in desecration.

It's not enough for people to actually say, well, I don't accept the Bible, but I don't accept its teaching, but it's not enough for me just to set it aside. It needs to be desecrated.

It needs to be spoiled. It needs to be polluted. It needs to be brought and trampled under our feet.

It's not fit for purpose. That's where we're at. The modern world glories in that desecration because it's exciting to the world, isn't it?

It's exciting to the person who really wants to live without God and to have God nowhere appear in His universe. It's exciting if they can say, well, that's it. I've got rid of God.

[12:09] And He no longer appears in human thinking. No longer appears in how humans see themselves or see their world or see their need. Let's desecrate what once was holy.

Let's take what God Himself says is sacred and not just put it aside but trample on it, desecrate it, make it unholy. That's what we're facing.

That's the generation we belong to. Let's put Christian morality away altogether. Let's no longer be satisfied with having it as an alternative for people who want that.

Let's just not even leave it at that. Desecrate it. Remove its sacredness. Cast it aside as of no use.

It's no accident, friends, that that spirit of desecration is made known practically in recent times.

Some of this goes back more than just our own age.

[13:24] But it's no accident that this kind of attitude and approach to life, to human life, is revealed to us in attitudes to the unborn and attitudes to those who are reaching the end of their days in this life.

Because we have faced and we're facing that drive, that attempt, although it's there already with the life of the unborn, with the hideousness of abortion, but it's there as well in the attempt recently to legalize what's called assisted dying.

It's not assisted dying, it's assisted suicide. It's assisting people to take their own lives, which is suicide, which is condemned in the Scriptures.

But all of that comes to the sanctity of life being desecrated. The sanctity of life no longer being seen as sacred, no longer seen as holy, no longer seen in the category in which God places human life.

Desecrate it. Make it unholy. Get rid of it. Not fit for purpose. And we have to stand as much as we can with the Lord's help against these tendencies of our day.

[14:47] And we have to say, this is what God is saying about human life. It's there to be regarded as sacred. That's why we call it the sanctity

of life.

Because at whatever stage you find human life, God is saying, it's sacred. You protect it. You look after it. You do the best for it.

And everything else that God calls sacred, His worship, His people, His church, His cause, wherever He calls something sacred, God means that we look after it, that we treated us sacred, that we regarded as important to Him.

Whereas the world of our day says, no, let's desecrate that. It's not fit to be regarded as of any importance. Here is God, God the King, God sitting on His throne, God the Sovereign One, God who rules over all things, including Christians, not just including Christians, but others as well, the whole world of human beings is ruled over by God.

Not willingly by most, perhaps, but certainly, nevertheless, certainly, as God rules. And there's God, the Creator.

[16:06] Well, He's saying, where are you going to find a place for me as a place of my rest, my habitation? Because all of these things I have made. And so, all these things came to be.

He's talking about the heaven. He's talking about the earth. He's talking about the universe, the physical universe, the creation, as we call it. They're all mine already, God is saying. I know everything about them already.

I made them. I placed them where they are. I gave names to all these stars, all these billions of stars, and these planets, and these solar systems. I gave names to them.

I brought them into being. I'm upholding them. Otherwise, they would just go to pieces. You remember Job, the holy man of God, who faced such difficulties in his life, and came to regret some of the things that he said in regard to the difficult providences God had ordained for him.

And as you go through the book of Job, it's not an easy book to understand, and I must say there are aspects of it that I myself have always found difficult to really follow in the precisely or with certainty over some of these passages, but nevertheless, there are many of them that come to us and are fairly clear in the way the Bible sets them before us.

[17:28] And as you remember, towards the end of the book of Job, after Job has listened to his friends who have consistently tried to argue with him that he must have had something seriously wrong in his life, or else there wouldn't be these difficulties in his life.

And of course, Job knew that was not the case. However, God took him, as you find in the final chapters there, he took him on a tour of the creation.

He took him up to the stars, he took him up, not saying this is literally the case, but in his mind, in the way he said this before Job, here is the Lord answering Job, he's saying, dress for action like a man, stand up, I will question you and you make it known to me.

Have you an arm like God? Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low. Behold, Beemoth, which I made gigantic animals, behold his strength.

Can you control him, God is saying? Can you control the planets, the influences of Pleiades and all of these other things that God describes there down through these chapters, the final chapters, till you come to chapter 42, where the summary of the whole book comes to us with power and God follows, God finishes with his speech to Job and says to Job, here I will speak, I will question you, you make it known to me and here is Job, I heard of you by the hearing of the ear but now my eye sees you therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

[19:22] You see Job knew God very well but he wrestled with the providence of God and spoke at times in a way that wasn't wise and here God having showed him all of this and here is Job saying, who was I to think I could actually rule my own life, rule the universe, actually decide what's good and bad, what's right and wrong?

I'm now seeing you as you really are, as you've shown me. And I repent in dust and ashes. Job is really saying, I'm just a speck.

I'm just a miserable speck in your sight. A sinful speck. And I need to repent in dust and ashes.

What size of God do we worship tonight? God? How does your view of God affect your life? Are we tonight concerned with a small God?

Do we think of God as an image of ourselves? Is it just a reflection of our humanness and of human abilities? Is it a perfection of ourselves?

[20:46] Do we take the things that we know are indeed human abilities and think of them as being made perfect and that's God? No.

No. No. God is much greater than that. God as King and Creator is infinitely above that.

And you know if we have an idea of God as being small then our view of sin will be small. And that's what's wrong with the world.

If you see that God is not really that great if you reject the Bible's presentation of God as that awesome great God who is the King and Creator of the universe then you wouldn't think much of sin either.

And you'll not think it a serious thing that the Bible says we sin against God. Well God will forgive. He's that kind of being. If He exists at all well the Bible says He'll forgive our sins.

[21:53] All He's got to do is just speak and cover my sin and say that's fine now I accept you. No God is not like that. but if we have the view that Isaiah had of God and the New Testament writers had of God if we have the view of God that the Bible sets before us uniformly in its teaching from beginning to end sin will not be insignificant.

Forgiveness will not be insignificant. Our view of ourselves will not be a view that really just sees us as somehow or other a reflection of God even though we're not perfect.

We'll be like Job. If our view of sin tonight is small why did Jesus die? Why did God send His Son into the world to die the death of the cross?

If it's not a significant thing for us to sin against God if our sin does not deserve what the Bible says as eternal death if our sin does not really deserve the hell that exists?

Why did Jesus experience hell in His soul when He said my God my God why have you forsaken me?

[23:17] If you want to see how serious is sin you don't first of all look into your own heart or into the life of somebody else you look into what the Bible tells us happened on the cross and you say what an enormously significant terrible thing our sin must be yes our sin when it needed the death of Jesus the Son of God on the cross to experience this hell in His soul in order to save us from it God and you see that's an important point isn't it that what we're saying here about God what God is revealing to us here about God and God in His immensity and our self as just a tiny wee speck in a creation compared to that it does not mean that in God's sight human life is insignificant that He doesn't see us at all as significant if we weren't significant to God why would

He save us I know we're saying we're not significant in terms of what we are as sinners we can never boast of that that's not the significance I'm talking about we are significant in the sense that God saw fit to have pity upon us to be merciful to us to send the Son to die on the cross for us if we didn't really matter to God He wouldn't have done that but He did and it's happened and it's true and it's a historical fact and because of that you can say however insignificant I may be in comparing myself to the being of God to the vastness of the universe I'm thankful to God tonight that I appear in His sight as significant enough to save me to save me from my sins one of the prelates or bishops in France in the 1600-1700s was a man called

Jean Baptiste Marcillon and he was an important person at the time he lived in the reign of Louis XIV who had the longest reign of any French king 72 years Louis XIV reigned and he was given the name Louis XIV the Great and he thought of course of himself as great so he had a huge magnificent extravagant court above any other court in Europe and he planned his own funeral to be equally spectacular impressive so he gave this prelate Jean Baptiste Marcillon he gave him instructions as to how his funeral was to be carried out and he said to him when I die I am to lie in state in a golden coffin at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and at my funeral the whole cathedral will be completely dark except for one candle which is going to be placed near my coffin so that all of those who attend will be in awe at the magnificence of

King Louis even in his death and Massignon did that he arranged that that's how it would be and apparently the whole cathedral was dark apart from this one candle near the coffin of the king and you can imagine the number of hundreds of people present in the cathedral at the time waiting to

see how things would develop and there was Massignon beginning his funeral oration and to everybody's surprise he slowly reached forward and just snuffed out the candle and there was none of the end but darkness and into that darkness Massignon cried with a loud voice only God is great there was the dead emperor the dead Louis in his golden coffin wanting the world to exclaim his magnificence even in death and there is this

Jean Baptiste Massignon saying no I won't do that because God alone is great and so it is that's what Isaiah long ago before then said that's what God showed through him who is great but God himself well God's greatness God's grace just in a word I've said more on that than I intended but such is the way of preaching and as we come to God's grace place of residence that God has well what is this palace this place of residence and the Hebrew text actually is important apparently grammarians tell us that the Hebrew is really something like what is the house that you would build for me what is the place of my rest and what is it but this this person that I'm going to describe that's really the run of the words if I can put it this way what is the house that you would build what is the place of my rest what else but this this person to whom I will look this is the place where I will rest the palace of the king it's not a grand edifice that you see like a literal palace it is in fact your believing heart if you're a believer tonight that's where he lives that's where he's chosen to make a residence for himself just as it was said of Zion long ago as you find in the

[29:22] Psalms and elsewhere small Zion was despised by many of Israel's enemies and Judah's enemies it's a small mountain where the temple was situated so small compared to some of the other places in the world but that's the place of which God says this is where I'm going to stay here is where I like it well this is where my presence will be known of course that's no longer the case and it's moved on in the New Testament for God to take up residence in our believing hearts and that's his temple that's where he resides that's what he's chosen as a place for himself just as the tragedy of God vacating that temple when we fell in Adam so it is God's own pleasure to replace that through Christ and to reside in our souls two great events in the history of mankind the vacating of the temple of our souls when we fell and became dead in sins and trespasses and what God restores us through Christ and when God comes to live again in our human hearts and make a residence for himself there what an amazing thing that is think of what this is saying heaven is my throne the earth is my footstool what is the house that you would build for me what is the place of my rest what but this this God in this human heart in your human soul this great and glorious

God this immeasurably great God this king this creator and he's chosen to make a place for himself in the believing hearts of his people and to say that's where my rest is that's where I'm going to live that's where I'm going to be found you look at any religion in the world that presents itself as a rival to Christianity a rival to the Christianity of the Bible will you find anything like that in it of course you won't because it's not the truth this is the truth the amazing truth the incomparable truth that this great God who created us and created the universe and upholds the universe by the word of his power that he has chosen to live and sanctify its human hearts remember Jesus speaking to the disciples in John 14 where he was teaching them about the fact that he had to leave physically leave them no longer be seen as with them in the world but he was going to be with them remember among the many things he said in John 14 23 verse 23 he said this whoever loves me will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come and make our abode with him isn't that wonderful what a magnificent verse if anyone loves me whoever loves me will keep my word will be obedient to my revelation will love my word just like

Isaiah is he saying will tremble at my word respect my word and my father will love him and we will come not I will come or he will come we will come these two persons of the Godhead of the triune God the father and the son through the third person the spirit which these chapters in John goes on to speak about there is a wonder of wonders for you tonight it's not a great palace literally in this world that God lives in he's chosen the heart of his people the believing people of God and he's saying of them this is where I desire to dwell God is saying that's what I've chosen for myself and it's the heart that's been broken broken humble contrite in spirit that trembles at my word sensitive to sin sensitive to our need of salvation sensitive to the holiness and the glory of God trembles at

my word what God is saying not trembles in abject fear not trembles in slavish fear but trembles in respect of giving respect and awe and a due place to God and to his word the trembling of obedience the trembling of delighting in the commandments of God as well as his promises and where that is the case then sin will be given the orders of eviction thomas chalmers famous theologian in scotland many years ago but after his conversion he was a preacher of the word but he wasn't converted at the time to begin with but after his conversion he spoke about the change in his life and what a great change it was he said and he spoke about this new affection that he had this new love that he had for God and for the things of God and for the word of God but he didn't just speak of it as a new affection or the power of a new affection he spoke of it as the expulsive power of a new affection why did he use the word expulsive because this new affection ejects things that are unlike itself and the love that

God has given to his people by which they love him and love everything like him it's a love that expels and love that expels what is unlike him and every time his people find creeping back into their hearts through cracks that we make ourselves if we can think of it in that imagery you want to expel them again everything you find in your heart that you know has crept into your thinking your conclusions!

that you know are not right you want to throw them out again your love for God insists don't let them live here eject them they don't belong here anymore and every every time you find sins appearing again in your life as I do every day I should be saying to them you don't belong here what's leaving you here get out I expel you I don't want you here it's not for you it's for the king it's for the lord but you notice this word rest as well in verse 1 where is the place of my rest just in closing let me say this it means more than the fact that God is just setting up a house in the souls of those that are described there as who are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at his word in other words obedient to himself it's saying more than that

[37:01] God has established that it's a place of his rest a place where he finds satisfaction a place of which he says this is my rest as he said of Zion in Psalm 132 here is where I will stay for I do like it well the psalmist put it you can say that if the soul of every individual has come to know Christ is in Christ follows Christ loves Christ and loves to love Christ God is saying I rest in that I find satisfaction in that I have created this as a palace for myself a temple for myself to come back into and I like that it pleases me I rest in that I find satisfaction there sometimes

I think when we come to a communion service I try and remind myself every time I've been hopefully serving the table presiding over the service I usually and hopefully I would like to be always the case that when I come to think of the privilege that it is for us there to take delight in God and in the salvation of God as that's represented in these elements of bread and of wine and of fellowship with God I also try and think of what an amazing thing that God is answering back and saying well I'm taking delight in this too I love to be here I find rest in the souls of my people and when they come either individually or collectively to remember the son of God in his death God is saying I am pleased to dwell there doesn't that fill you with amazement not only that God makes a resting place for himself in your heart as a

Christian as a believer but that he's saying I'm taking delight in that I find satisfaction in that are you satisfied tonight with Jesus are you still outside of those who say tonight I am satisfied in Christ and I love the fact that God assures me he finds satisfaction in living in me or are you not yet in that situation have you not yet come to receive Christ into your heart surely you're not amongst those people who say some even who attend church like we are tonight who take relative pressure and so many things to do with coming to church reading the Bible hearing sermons meeting with God's people but who still say to Jesus there actually isn't a home in my heart for you at this point it's not your home it's not where I want you to live and dominate and take over my life why should it be like that why should anyone say that about this great king why should anyone say to this

God when he says that I will look to the one who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word why should you be left out if you are tonight still not in Christ still not among the saved among those who fear God and who have God in their hearts well if we don't have a home for God in our hearts it's certainly true of us that God has no home for us in heaven and that's a very solemn point there are many people who well will say I'll take my chances I know I'm going to die and I believe

the fact the Bible tells me there's an eternity but I'll leave it for the moment and somehow it'll work out don't bank on it you're not assured of any such thing happening without Jesus in your life it won't be the case but you are assured of this if tonight God has made a home in your heart and finds that as his residence in this world if God is in your heart and Christ occupies it as king whatever happens to you in this life whatever people will throw at you whatever accusations they may come with however much they may ridicule your thoughts and your conclusions and your profession and your faith with a home for Jesus in your heart God has a home with him in heaven and that is the most important thing that any of us can know let's pray Lord our God we pray that your word again will be blessed to us we thank you for the gospel itself for the teaching we find in your word that brings us your greatness to be described we confess we cannot comprehend oh [42:50] Lord your greatness in anything like its entirety but we thank you that you have revealed that greatness to us in a measure and we pray that we may value it every day of our lives we pray that we may commend it to the world around us help us Lord we pray to keep close to you day by day help us to trust in you when our trust may be called away by others to other things grant that you such a great salvation such a great heaven awaiting your people hear us now we pray for Jesus sake amen now we're concluding by singing this evening in Psalm 51 Psalm 51 which in the Scottish Psalter and we're reading we're singing verses 14 to 17 find out on page 281

David as you know has been confessing his sin to God throughout this Psalm and he comes here to think of the way that God has is pleased to receive a broken spirit a broken and a contrite heart something like Isaiah these verses where he says you desire not sacrifice or else I would give it to you what David is saying by that is even if I give you a sacrifice and that's all there is to it I need more than that I need the sacrifice of a broken heart which I know you will not despise so we'll sing verses 14 to 17 O God of my salvation God me from blood guiltiness set free!

God of my salvation God me from blood guiltiness set free!

hear that shall my tongue alert sing of thy righteousness my closet lips O Lord by thee let them be opened it!

then shall thy praises by my mouth abroad be published shed for thou desire not sacrifice else would I give it thee nor wilt her with burnt offering at all delighted be a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart

[46:42] Lord thou wilt not despise now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit remain with you and rest upon you now and ever more Amen from who!

Thank you.