

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 6

Theme: The call and commission of Isaiah to the prophetic office

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Chapter 6

Chronologically, as well as logically, the Book of Isaiah begins with this chapter, which constitutes the crisis in the life of Isaiah and brings him into the prophetic office. Prior to this, we have no record of his life or relationship to God. His ministry began at the death of King Uzziah.¹

Many serious students of Isaiah have believed that the record of Isaiah's call in this chapter occurred before he wrote any of the prophecies in this book. The title "Holy One of Israel," Isaiah's trademark name for God, connects with his call, and he used that title for God throughout the book. Likewise, the prophet's emphases on glory, majesty, and righteousness are strong in chapter 6, and they also appear throughout the rest of the book. As already mentioned, the three messages in chapters 1—5 provide a perfect introduction to the rest of Isaiah, and it was probably for this reason that these chapters were arranged in the text before chapter 6. By placing the record of his call here, Isaiah also vindicated the prophecies in chapters 1—5 for his readers.²

Isaiah 6:1-8

Why did Isaiah date this passage, since he did not date most of his others? Probably he did so because King Uzziah had been the best king of Judah since Solomon. Nevertheless, during the last part of his reign he suffered from leprosy, a judgment from the Lord for his pride (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chron. 26:16-23). In this respect, his life foreshadowed the history of the nation he ruled. King Uzziah died about 740 B.C., after reigning for 52 years (2 Kings 15:2; 2 Chron. 26:3).

When Uzziah died, most people in the nation would have felt a great loss. Who would lead them next, and would he provide for them all that Uzziah had? Assyria was growing in power and ambition to the east, so the threat of foreign invasion was real. Israel needed a strong king. As things turned out, Judah receded to a lower level from which she did not rise. At such a time Isaiah received a vision of Israel's true king, Yahweh, who was more than adequate to provide for His people. This unusual vision prepared the prophet to act and speak for God (cf. Gen. 32:30; Exod. 19:21; 20:19; 33:20; Deut. 18:16; Judg. 13:22). Even though God is invisible because He is spirit (31:3; John 1:18; 4:24), He has manifested Himself at various times so people can appreciate certain aspects of His personality.

Israel suffered God's judgment under five great powers that followed one another in succession: Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Isaiah described Yahweh as sovereign ("Lord"), the overlord of all the earth. He was exalted by means of His throne on which He was sitting in royal attire. The glory of His person filled His awesome, celestial palace-temple (cf. 1 Kings 22:17-23; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Ezek. 1:3-28; 8:1-4; Dan. 7:2, 9-10; Zech. 3:1-5; Rev. 4—5).

The apostle John wrote that it was Jesus' glory that Isaiah saw (John 12:41).³

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

The prophet Isaiah has been speaking to the Jews in Judah regarding the fact that they have forsaken God, while maintaining the appearance of worship. God has warned them through Isaiah that if they do not repent, they will be removed from the land.

Tonight, we pick up in chapter six as we are told of a vision that Isaiah saw...

¹In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

Train: shuwl {shool}; lWv , from an unused root meaning to hang down; hem 6, skirt 4, train 1.

Rank was viewed in the hem of the robe or skirt; it often held the genealogy, social role, etc.; a contract was sealed by impressing the embroidery into the clay tablet; a divorce could be accomplished by ripping off the hem; etc. Cf. Mt 9:20; 14:36; 23:5; Mk 6:56; Lk 8:44; 1 Sam 24; Ruth 3:9.

[In the year that king Uzziah died] Uzziah died 38 years before the destruction of the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel (Isa. 6:1; 2Ki. 17). Evidently the prophecies of Isa. 1-5 were written before this, or during the reign of Uzziah, leaving only Isa. 6 to be written during the reign of Jotham, Isa. 7-12 during the reign of Ahaz, and Isa. 13-66 during the reign of Hezekiah.⁴

Isaiah opens this chapter on a very doleful note taking us to the funeral of Uzziah. Uzziah has been a good king. Now he is dead. It is the belief of many that he was the last great king of the southern kingdom of Judah and that after his death the glory of the Lord was no longer to be seen. I am not sure but what that is true. Uzziah brought the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Ammonites into subjection. He had ruled for fifty-two years, and the nation had been blessed materially during that period according to God's promise. As F. Delitzsch says, "The national glory of Israel died out too with King Uzziah and has never been recovered to this day." I heartily concur with that statement.

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah is thinking, Good King Uzziah is dead, and things are going to the bowwows now. Israel will be taken captive. Prosperity will cease. A depression will come, and famine will follow. In that frame of mind Isaiah does what every person ought to do -- he goes into the temple. He goes to the proper place, the place where he could meet with God. Psalm 29:9 says, "...in his temple doth every one speak of his glory." In God's temple Isaiah makes the discovery that the true King of the nation is not dead.

"I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" -- God is on the throne.

Isaiah has already told us not to put confidence in man, whose breath is in his nostrils. When man exhales, he doesn't know for sure that he ever will be able to inhale again. A man can have a heart attack and die, just like that. Don't put your confidence in man. Old King Uzziah is dead. Yes, it is true, and the throne looks pretty bleak right now, but behind the earthly throne is the heavenly throne. Isaiah sees the Lord sitting upon a throne.

⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

That is a vision that some of God's people need in this day. I see no reason for being pessimistic. This is the greatest day in the history of the world. I would rather live right now than in any other period of time. Somebody says, "Oh, look at the terrible condition of the world. Look at our nation and the deteriorating condition in our cities." Well, the Lord said it was going to be that way. He said that tares were going to be sown in among the wheat. And He was going to let them both grow together. My business today is sowing the seed of the Word of God. I know that it is going to bring forth a harvest. And it is heading up today -- there is no question about that. We don't need to be disturbed. God will take care of the harvest. Our business is to sow the seed; that is, to get the Word of God out to needy hearts.

This is a great day in which to live. Do you know that the Word of God is going out to more people than it ever has before? Even my radio broadcast is reaching more people in a half hour than I was able to reach in all my years of preaching behind a pulpit. And the message is going around the world! I realize the world conditions are alarming. The tares are really growing, but we have a good stand of wheat also. The wheat is growing right along. It is thrilling to be sowing the Word of God in this day!

When Isaiah goes into the temple, he finds that the Lord is still on the throne. And some of us need to be reminded that God is still on the throne in our day. He still hears and answers prayers. He is still doing wonderful things. Isaiah also makes another discovery when he goes into the temple. He finds out that God is high and lifted up and that His train fills the temple. That is the second thing we need to discover about God. God is high and lifted up, and He will not compromise with sin.⁵

The year that King Uzziah died was approximately 740 B.C. He remained leprous until he died because he tried to take over the high priest's duties (2 Chronicles 26:18-21). Although Uzziah was generally a good king with a long and prosperous reign, many of his people turned away from God.⁶

Six-fold Description of Jehovah

1. I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1).
2. His train filled the temple.
3. Above the throne stood seraphims calling, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with His glory" (Isa. 6:3).
4. The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried (Isa. 6:4).
5. The house was filled with smoke.
6. I heard the voice of Jehovah (Isa. 6:8-13).

Isaiah's vision was his commission to be God's messenger to his people. Isaiah was given a difficult mission. He had to tell people who believed they were blessed by God that God was going to destroy them because of their disobedience.

⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

Isaiah's lofty view of God in 6:1-4 gives us a sense of God's greatness, mystery, and power. Isaiah's example of recognizing his sinfulness before God encourages us to confess our sin. His picture of forgiveness reminds us that we, too, are forgiven. When we recognize how great our God is, how sinful we are, and the extent of God's forgiveness, we receive power to do his work. How does your concept of the greatness of God measure up to Isaiah's?⁷

There is a throne in heaven, and the Lord God sits upon it as the sovereign ruler of the universe! This is central fact of heaven; that there is an occupied throne in heaven. God does not sit on a chair in heaven. Anyone might sit on a chair. But sovereign kings sit on thrones. Judges sit on thrones. Those with proper authority and sovereignty sit on thrones.

Isaiah was not alone in seeing God's throne. Almost everyone in the Bible who had a vision of heaven, was taken to heaven, or wrote about heaven spoke of God's throne. The prophet Michaiah saw God's throne (1 Kings 22:19), Job saw God's throne (Job 26:9), David saw God's throne (Psalm 9:4 and 7, 11:4), the Sons of Korah saw God's throne (Psalm 45:6, 47:8), Ethan the Ezrahite saw God's throne (Psalm 89:14), Jeremiah saw God's throne (Lamentations 5:19), Ezekiel saw God's throne (Ezekiel 1:26, 10:1), Daniel saw God's throne (Daniel 7:9), and the Apostle John saw God's throne (Revelation 4:1-11). In fact, the book of Revelation may as well be called the book of God's throne, because God's throne is specifically mentioned more than 35 times in that book!

The bottom line of atheism or materialism is that they believe there is no throne; there is no seat of authority or power all the universe must answer to. The bottom of humanism is that there is a throne - but man sits upon it. But the Bible makes it clear that there is a throne in heaven, and no fallen man sits on the throne, but the Lord God is enthroned in heaven.

Isaiah may have been depressed or discouraged because a great leader of Judah was no longer on the throne. God in heaven now shows Isaiah, Don't worry about it, Isaiah. Uzziah may not be on his throne, but I am on My throne.⁸

In the Year that Uzziah died: Uzziah had a long and eventful reign of 52 years. His reign overlaps the reign of Jeroboam II who was the last of the powerful kings of Israel. Jeroboam had established control over all the former territories held by David and Solomon, making Syria a vassal state as far as the Euphrates and he gained control of Eilat which is the important port on the Gulf of Aqabah with access to the Indian Ocean. Damascus regained their own sovereignty after the death of Jeroboam 2 Chr 26:2 says that Uzziah restored Eilat to Judah. 2 Chr 26:22 says: Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write.⁹

⁷ Life Application Study Bible.

⁸ <https://www.studydrive.net/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

⁹ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa3-6.htm>

Seven Facts about God's Throne

1. God is spoken of as sitting on a throne 14 times (Isa. 6:1; 1Ki. 22:19; 2Chr. 18:18; Ps.9:4; 47:8; Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2,10; 5:1,7,13; 6:16; 19:4; 21:5).
2. It is now in heaven (Ps. 11:4).
3. It is called Thy throne (Ps. 89:14; 93:2; 132:12).
4. It is called His throne (Ps. 97:2; 103:19; 132:12; Dan. 7:9; Rev. 1:4; 3:21; 12:5).
5. It is called the throne of God (Mt. 23:22; Heb. 12:2; Rev. 7:9-17; 21:1-3).
6. It is called the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).
7. It is called the throne of His majesty (Heb. 8:1).

Here the long flowing robe seems to have filled the throne room of the temple. In the East, long robes indicated grandeur and majesty.

Uzziah began his reign when he was only 16 years old, and he reigned 52 years. Overall, he was a good king, and 2 Kings 15:3 says, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 2 Chronicles 28:5 says, He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.¹⁰

But Uzziah's life ended tragically. 2 Chronicles 26:16 says, But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. In response, God struck Uzziah with leprosy, and he was an isolated leper until his death.¹¹

The year of King Uzziah's death, Isaiah saw the Lord. Uzziah was an interesting character in history. He was 16 years old when he became king (2Chr. 26:1). He had a good beginning of seeking the Lord, and the Scripture says,

2Chr. 26:5 ...as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him.

He defeated Judah's enemies, and built strong defenses. He became very strong and rich, and his fame spread as far as Egypt.

2Chr. 26:16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

When the priests rebuked Uzziah for this action, he became enraged (2Chr. 26:19). Leprosy broke out on his forehead. He was a leper until the day of his death (2Chr. 26:21). It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord.¹²

The Lord Sitting On A Throne

There are several times that the prophets describe seeing God seated on His throne. Ezekiel's descriptions in Ezekiel 1 and 10. Daniel 7 describes it, and so does John throughout the book of Revelation, especially in chapters four and five.

One vision not often remembered is Stephen...

¹⁰ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

¹¹ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

¹² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

Acts 7:55-56 *But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

This of course got him killed. But it is fascinating to do a comparison of all the accounts. Isaiah's description of the Lord is that He was "lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." "Lofty and exalted" basically means "high and lifted up."¹³

The Train Of His Robe

The train of His robe filled the temple. The "train" of a robe (Heb: "shool") is basically the hem, or the fringe. Remember that this was what demonstrated authority, rank, and position. Today, we look at the shoulder and collar of a military uniform to determine rank and authority. Then, the robe was like a man's uniform, and its hem, fringe, or train was his rank.

Understanding this leads to an interesting study through Scripture. The high priest had a blue robe, with the fringe being pomegranates and bells. Their purpose was to make a tinkling noise when he entered the holy place, proving his authority and right to be there - if there was no noise, God would strike him dead.

Ex. 28:35 *"It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the LORD, so that he will not die."*

When Saul accidentally tore the edge of Samuel's robe,

1Sam. 15:28 *...Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today..."*

This demonstrated that in rejecting Samuel's authority as prophet, Saul lost his authority as king. Later, Saul was relieving himself in a cave, but didn't realize that David and his mighty men were hiding inside.

1Sam. 24:4 *The men of David said to him, "Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly.*

David's conscience really bothered him for doing this, because what he had done was the equivalent of pulling the crown off of Saul's head.

You may also recall the story of the woman who'd been hemorrhaging for 12 years, having suffered much at the hands of many physicians, pursued Jesus. She...

Luke 8:44 *came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped.*

In doing this, she was submitting herself to the authority of Christ, and she was instantly made well. This simple act worked for others as well.

Mark 6:56 *Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.*

And so here in Isaiah, the fact that the train of God's robe fills the temple demonstrates His absolute authority. It is almost as if He was wearing a general's uniform with not three stars or five stars, but a billion stars.¹⁴

¹³ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

¹⁴ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

(Heb. seraphim) (6:2, 6) H8314: This noun is probably related to the verb saraph, which means “to burn with fire.” These angelic creatures belong to the heavenly host and are only mentioned twice in Scripture—both times in Isa. 6. Apparently these beings conduct the worship of God in heaven and are different from the cherubim, who are described in Rev. 4:6–8 as surrounding God’s throne instead of standing above it, as described here (6:2). The relation of their name to burning may be due to their flaming appearance (similar to the fiery serpents of Num. 21:6; Deut. 8:15). But their name probably relates to their role in purification. Fire is a symbol for purity; appropriately one of these fiery beings purified Isaiah’s lips with a live coal (6:6).¹⁵

²Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

Cherubim (Ezek 1, 10; Rev 4), Seraphim (Isa 6 only), and Ophanim (“wheels”) are angelic beings associated with the Throne of God.

Seraphim: similar to the cherubim (some believe they’re identical). Some suggest that the Cherubim are enforcers: judgment; the Seraphim, grace.

Cherubim: Gen 3:24; Ezek 28; Isa 14:13. God spoken of as He “Who dwelleth between the Cherubim” (as on the Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant).

Four faces (Ezek 1:10; 10:14); wings: Ezek: four; Rev, Isa: six.

Seraphim are around the throne of God. This is one of the few mentions of these created intelligences in Scripture. Practically nothing is known concerning them. Seraph means “to burn.” It is the word used in connection with the sin offerings and judgment. Apparently the seraphim are in contrast to the cherubim. The seraphim search out sin, and the cherubim protect the holiness of God. Never is the word seraph connected with the sweet incense or sweet savor offerings, those offerings which speak of the person of Christ. The seraph is active, and the cherub is passive. We will find both of them in the Books of Ezekiel and Revelation as the “living creatures.” The seraphim in Isaiah’s vision are protecting the holiness of God. He is “high and lifted up.”

God will not compromise with evil. I thank Him for that. He will not compromise with evil in your life nor in my life, because evil and sin have brought all of the sorrows in this world. Sin is that which puts gray in the hair, creates the tottering step and the stooped shoulder. It is the thing that breaks up homes and lives and fills the grave. I am glad that God does not compromise with it. God says that He hates sin and He intends to destroy it and remove it from this universe. Today our God is moving forth uncompromisingly, unhesitatingly, and undeviatingly against sin. He does not intend to accept the white flag of surrender from it. He intends to drive sin from His universe. That is what God says. He is high and lifted up. My friend, you and I are going to have to bow before Him. When Isaiah saw God on the throne, it brought him down upon his face. Oh, how desperately the church needs another vision of God, not just of His love, but of His holiness

¹⁵ Nelson Study Bible

and righteousness! Because God is holy, He moves in judgment against sin -- and He has never asked me to apologize for Him. So I won't. God is angry against sin, and He will punish those who engage in it. He says He will.

He also says that He is your Friend and will save you. But you have to come His way. You have to put your faith and trust in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."¹⁶

The throne, the attending seraphim (angels), and the threefold holy all stressed God's holiness. Seraphim were a type of angel whose name is derived from the word for "burn," perhaps indicating their purity as God's ministers. In a time when moral and spiritual decay had peaked, it was important for Isaiah to see God in his holiness. Holiness means "morally perfect, pure, and set apart from all sin." We also need to discover God's holiness. Our daily frustrations, society's pressures, and our shortcomings narrow our view of God. We need the Bible's view of God as high and lifted up to empower us to deal with our problems and concerns. God's moral perfection, properly seen, will purify us from sin, cleanse our mind of our problems, and enable us to worship and to serve.¹⁷

Above it stood seraphim: Surrounding the throne of God are angels known here as seraphim. In many other passages, these angels are known as cherubim (Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 37:16; Ezekiel 10:3) or as the living creatures of Revelation 4:6-11. This is the only chapter in the Bible where these creatures are named seraphim.

Some deny that cherubim and seraphim refer to the same beings. But the name seraphim means, burning ones. Ezekiel 1:13 describes cherubim (see also Ezekiel 10:15) this way: their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. That certainly seems to describe burning ones!

Each one had six wings: In Revelation 4:8, the Apostle John also mentions their six wings. They need the six wings, so each can cover his face (to show they are too lowly to look upon the Lord), so each can cover his feet (to hide this humble area of the body, so nothing even possibly deficient is seen in the Lords presence), and so each can fly.¹⁸

The Lord said to Moses, You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live (Exodus 33:20). Apparently the same is true even for angels, so the seraphim cover their faces.

The two wings with which the angels fly mean nothing else than their ready and cheerful performance of the commandments of God . . . The two wings with which they cover their face show plainly enough that even angels cannot endure Gods brightness, and that they are dazzled by it in the same manner as when we attempt to gaze upon the radiance of the sun. (Calvin)

The seraphim used four of their wings to express their humility, and used two of their wings to express their willingness and ability to serve God. This is the proper balance.

¹⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁷ Life Application Study Bible.

¹⁸ <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

For the seraph remembers that even though sinless he is yet a creature, and therefore he conceals himself in token of his nothingness and unworthiness in the presence of the thrice Holy One. (Spurgeon)

Thus they have four wings for adoration and two for active energy; four to conceal themselves, and two with which to occupy themselves in service; and we may learn from them that we shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverend and humbled in his presence. Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigor, adoration must exceed activity. As Mary at Jesus feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving, so must sacred reverence take the first place, and energetic service follow in due course. (Spurgeon)

Fiery angels attended the Lord. "Seraphim," a transliteration of the Hebrew word, probably means "burning ones." (cf. Num. 21:6). This is the only reference to seraphim as angelic beings in Scripture. Usually this Hebrew word describes snakes (cf. Num. 21:6; Deut. 8:15; Isa. 14:29; 30:6). What John saw may have been dragon-like creatures. They covered their faces, as we do when we are in the presence of something extremely brilliant, to hide and protect themselves from the superlative glory of God. They covered their feet for the same reason and perhaps as an indication that they renounced going anywhere on their own. One writer suggested that the feet may be euphemisms for the genital areas (cf. 7:20; Exod. 4:25). In this case the creatures may have been expressing modesty. They used their third pair of wings to fly, namely, to carry out the orders of their sovereign.¹⁹

³And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Holy, Holy, Holy. 3x: Trinity?

Holy, holy, holy: To say the word holy twice in Hebrew is to describe someone as "most holy." To say the word holy three times intensifies the idea to the highest level. In other words, the holiness of God is indescribable in human language. To be holy means to be different, distant, or transcendent. Thus the song of the seraphim is a constant refrain that the transcendence of God is indescribable. Although the Lord is totally different from us—He is perfect—in His mercy He still reaches down to take care of us. The whole earth is full of His glory: The Hebrew word order is, "The fullness of all the earth is His glory." We know that the glory of God transcends the universe (Ps. 113:4–6); yet in order to balance the expression of the transcendence of God in the first half of this verse, the words of the second half emphasize God's closeness to His creation—His involvement with the earth and its people.²⁰

This pictures the holiness and glory of our God. He is high and lifted up; and, if we would see Him today in that position, we would be delivered from low living. It would also deliver some folk from this easy familiarity that they seem to have with Jesus. They talk about Him as if He were a buddy and as if they could speak to Him in any way they please. My friend, you cannot

¹⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁰ Nelson Study Bible

rush into the presence of God. He doesn't permit it. You come to the Father through Christ. This is the only way He can be approached. You can never come into the presence of the Father because of who you are. You come into His presence because you are in Christ. The Lord Jesus made that very clear when He said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." If you are His child, you can come with boldness to the throne of grace, but you cannot come to Him on any other basis.²¹

What does it mean that God is holy, and holy in the highest possible sense? Holiness, at its root, has the idea of apartness. It describes someone, or something, which is set apart from other people or things. An object can be holy if it is set apart for sacred service. A person is holy if they are set apart for Gods will and purpose.

What is the Lord set apart from? He is set apart from creation, in that the Lord God is not a creature, and He exists outside of all creation. If all creation were to dissolve, the Lord God would remain. He is set apart from humanity, in that His nature or essence is Divine, not human. God is not a super-man or the ultimate man. God is not merely smarter than any man, stronger than any man, older than any man, or better than any man. You cant measure God on mans chart at all. He is Divine, and we are human.

Yet, because we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), humanity is compatible with Divinity. They are different, but they do not automatically oppose each other. This is how Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, could add humanity to His deity when He became a man. Unfallen humanity is not deity, but it is compatible with it.

Gods holiness is a part of everything He is and does. Gods power is a holy power. Gods love is a holy love. Gods wisdom is a holy wisdom. Holiness is not an aspect of Gods personality; it is one characteristic of His entire Being.²²

Their joy in God's presence was evident in their calling out to each other ascribing supreme holiness to Yahweh of armies. A triple appellation of holiness, a "trisagion," indicated that Yahweh's holiness is superlative, the greatest possible, and complete. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is there another threefold repetition of God's holiness, but there is in the New (Rev. 4:8). Other repetitions of words three times for emphasis are not uncommon (e.g., Jer. 22:29; Ezek. 21:27; Rev. 8:13). Holiness is distinctness from all that is not divine, especially in reference to ethical behavior.

God's glory is His manifested holiness. "His holiness is simply his God-ness in all his attributes, works, and ways. . . . He is not like us, only bigger and nicer. He is in a different category. He is holy." Isaiah saw God as absolutely upright, correct, and true. His glory was not restricted to the throne room or to heaven, however, but it filled the whole earth. God's glory fills the earth in that the revelation of God's attributes fills the earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-3). God's glory refers to the outshining of His person.²³

²¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²² <https://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

²³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

The Seraphim call out to one another, saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” John told us in Revelation that...

Rev. 4:8 *And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.”*

When it comes down to it, God's holiness is all-encompassing. We can think of God as being the manifestation of love, or grace, or mercy, or justice, or power, etc., but what He is most of all is holy. That is the attribute of God by which the creatures are most overwhelmed.²⁴

Seraphs, angelic beings who were above the Lord, are referred to in the Scriptures only here. “Seraphs” is from *sarap*, which means “to burn,” possibly suggesting that they were ardent in their zeal for the Lord. It is also noteworthy that one of the seraphs took a burning coal to Isaiah (v. 6). They had six wings (the four living creatures Ezekiel saw each had four wings, Ezek. 1:5, 11). Covering their faces with two wings indicates their humility before God. Their covering their feet with two other wings may denote service to God, and their flying may speak of their ongoing activity in proclaiming God’s holiness and glory.

In calling to one another the seraphs, whose number is not given, were proclaiming that the Lord Almighty is holy. The threefold repetition of the word holy suggests supreme or complete holiness. This threefold occurrence does not suggest the Trinity, as some have supposed. The Trinity is supported in other ways (e.g., see comments on Isa. 6:8). Repeating a word three times for emphasis is common in the Old Testament (e.g., Jer. 22:29; Ezek. 21:27). The seraphs also proclaimed that His glory fills the earth (cf. Num. 14:21) much as His robe filled the temple. By contrast the people of Judah were unholy (cf. Isa. 5; 6:5) though they were supposed to be a holy people (Ex. 22:31; Deut. 7:6).

As the seraphs cried out, Isaiah saw the temple shake and then it was filled with smoke (Isa. 6:4). The thresholds (cf. Amos 9:1) were large foundation stones on which the doorposts stood. The shaking (cf. Ex. 19:18) suggested the awesome presence and power of God. The smoke was probably the cloud of glory which Isaiah’s ancestors had seen in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21; 16:10) and which the priests in Solomon’s day had viewed in the dedicated temple (1 Kings 8:10-13).²⁵

⁴And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

If even the doorposts of the heavenly temple shook in response to God’s holiness, how much more will the whole earth (v. 3) shake when the Lord visits it (Matt. 24:29, 30).

[filled with smoke] This is the first time the smoke of the glory of God is referred to as filling the temple. See Rev. 15:8.²⁶

"The voice of him that cried" is the voice of the seraphim as they proclaim God's holiness.

²⁴ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

²⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

²⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

What effect is this going to have on Isaiah?²⁷

The praise of one and then another of the seraphim was so powerful that it shook the heavenly temple to its foundations. Isaiah also saw smoke billowing throughout the space, suggestive of God's power to consume (cf. 33:14; Exod. 19:18; Deut. 4:24; Heb. 10:26-31; 12:29; Rev. 9:2), and of prayer (Rev. 8:4). It evidently arose from the altar of incense (v. 6).²⁸

⁵Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

[for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts] Isaiah had the ancient superstitious feeling that if one saw God he would die, but here is another example proving this is not so. Naturally, a man seeing God would feel unclean, undone, and corrupt before His presence, but it carries no death sentence. See Gen. 32:30; Judg. 6:22-23; 13:22.²⁹

Isaiah was God's man before he had this experience, but it still had a tremendous effect on him. The reaction of Isaiah to such a vision is revolutionary. He sees himself as he really is in the presence of God -- undone. It reveals to him his condition. When he had seen God, he could see himself. The problem with many of us today is that we don't walk in the light of the Word of God. If we did, we would see ourselves. That is what John is talking about in the first chapter of his first epistle: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth [keeps on cleansing] us from all sin" (1John 1:7). If we walk in the light of His Word, we are going to see exactly what Isaiah saw -- that we are undone and men of unclean lips. You have never really seen the Lord, my friend, if you feel that you are worthy or merit something or have some claim upon God.

Job had an experience similar to Isaiah's, and his reaction was, "I abhor myself." Job was a self-righteous man. He could maintain his integrity in the presence of his friends who were attempting to tear him to bits. They told him that he was a rotten sinner, but he looked them straight in the eye and said, "As far as I know, I am a righteous man." From his viewpoint he was right, and he won the match against them. But he was not perfect. When Job came into the presence of God, he no longer wanted to talk about maintaining his righteousness. When Job really saw who he was, he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). If you walk in the light of the Word of God, you will see yourself, and you will know that even as a child of God you need the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse you from all sin.

You will find that other men had the same reaction when they came into the presence of God. John, on the Isle of Patmos, wrote, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead..." (Rev. 1:17). When Daniel saw the Lord, he said, "Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan. 10:8). That was also the experience of Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle. After Paul met the Lord, he no longer saw himself as a self-righteous Pharisee,

²⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁸ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

but as a lost sinner in need of salvation. He then could say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7). He saw his need of Jesus Christ.³⁰ Isaiah feared that he would be consumed since he was in the presence of the purest of all beings. He announced woe on himself; he was in deep trouble (cf. 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22). These are the first words that Isaiah himself spoke in this book, and they announce a prophetic woe on himself. He first had to become aware of his own sin and uncleanness before he could worship God as he should. Not only did he have unclean lips, but he dwelt among a people whose lips were very unclean and, therefore, unfit to praise or speak for God. King Uzziah died an unclean leper (2 Chron. 26:16-21). Unclean lips evidence unclean hearts (cf. Matt. 12:34). Whereas God was holy, Isaiah and the Jews were unclean, not upright, impure in their ethical conduct. Isaiah sensed his danger because he saw the real King of Israel who was Yahweh of armies. It is in seeing God for who He is that we can see ourselves for who we are and can, therefore, accurately evaluate our condition (cf. Job 42:5-6; Dan. 10:14-17; Rev. 1:17).³¹

Confronted with this vision of the Lord, Isaiah realized that he was under judgment—that he was undone. He must have thought that he had come to the end of his life. I am a man of unclean lips: Isaiah knew that he was a sinner. He realized that his lips were the only ones not giving God praise in that setting. a people: Isaiah's plight is the plight of every person. No one, in his or her present state, is capable of standing before the Holy One (Ps. 24:3). the King, the Lord of hosts: After contemplating the death of Uzziah (v. 1), Isaiah had seen the King who will never die.³²

6Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

Rev 8:5; Ex 1:13; 10:2. The fire never goes out (Lev 6:13).

[a live coal] The live coal did not cleanse the prophet; it was merely a sign to him of assurance that the message he heard about his being cleansed was true. Genuine moral cleansing can only be accomplished by faith in the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 9:22; 1Pet. 1:18-23; 1Jn. 1:7-9; Rev. 1:5).³³

This "live coal" has come from the burnt altar where sin had been dealt with. In the next chapter we will see the prediction of the birth of Christ, but it is not the incarnation of Christ that saves us, it is His death upon the Cross. For this reason, Isaiah needs the live coal from off the burnt altar, which is symbolic of Christ's death. This living coal represents the cleansing blood of Christ that keeps on cleansing us from all sin.³⁴

Seeing the Lord and listening to the praise of the angels, Isaiah realized that he was sinful before God, with no hope of measuring up to God's standard of holiness. When Isaiah's lips were touched with a live burning coal, however, he was told that his sins were forgiven. It wasn't the

³⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³² Nelson Study Bible

³³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

coal that cleansed him, but God. In response, Isaiah submitted himself entirely to God's service. No matter how difficult his task would be, he said, "Here I am. Send me." The painful cleansing process was necessary before Isaiah could fulfill the task to which God was calling him. Before we accept God's call to speak for him to those around us, we must be cleansed as Isaiah was, confessing our sins and submitting to God's control. Letting God purify us may be painful, but we must be purified so that we can truly represent God, who is pure and holy.³⁵

One of the seraphim flew to me: These angelic beings, surrounding the throne of God, ministered to Isaiah. One flew to Isaiah with a live coal - which means the coal was still hot and burning. It was so hot that even an angel had to use the tongs from the altar.³⁶

Isaiah only acknowledged his hopeless condition—he did not plead with God or make vows to God—and God then went into action. Confession must precede cleansing (cf. 1 John 1:9). The altar from which the seraph took the coal was probably the brazen altar in heaven, in which case the coal itself symbolizes substitute sacrifice.

Fire from the brazen altar lit the incense on the incense altar in Israel, so, whichever altar may be in view, the coal connects with sacrifice. Ultimately all sin is forgiven because of sacrifice. Fire in the Old Testament symbolizes the wrath of God (Gen. 3:24; Num. 11:1-3), the holiness of God (Exod. 3:2-6; 19:18-25), His purifying process (Num. 31:22-23; Mal. 3:2-3), and the context of the Law (Deut. 4:12, 33, 36).

"A seraph peels off from his flight path around the throne, diving straight for Isaiah. He's holding a burning coal that he took from the altar with tongs, but not because it is hot. After all, a seraph himself is a burning one. He took this coal with tongs because it is a holy thing. It belongs to the place of sacrifice and atonement and forgiveness. But this holy thing touches Isaiah's dirty mouth, and it does not hurt him, it heals him. What we must see, in the context of the whole Bible, is that this burning coal symbolizes the finished work of Christ on the cross."³⁷

⁷And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Dan 10:16; Jer 1:9.

Isaiah is a man of unclean lips, and the condition for cleansing is confession: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1:9). I believe it would be more accurate to say that this glowing coal is symbolic of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the One high and lifted up on the throne, and He was the One lifted up on the Cross. It is absolutely essential that He be lifted up, because He came down to this earth and became one of us that He might become "...the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

And so the lips of this man Isaiah are cleansed. I take it that this act of putting the coal on his lips was just an external manifestation of what happened in the inner man. It is what proceeds out

³⁵ Life Application Study Bible.

³⁶ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

³⁷ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

of the heart of a man that goes through the lips; and, when the lips are cleansed, it means that the heart is cleansed also.

There was a man in the New Testament who also was "undone." His name was Paul, and he cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). When Paul said this, he was not a lost sinner but a saint of God, learning the lesson from God that he needed to walk in the Spirit because he could not live for God by himself. Living for God can only be accomplished by divine grace. Man's responsibility is to confess his sinfulness and his inability to please God. Therefore, we need to have the redemption of Christ applied to our lives again and again and again.

After Isaiah's lips are cleansed, something happens:³⁸

And he touched my mouth with it: This must have been painful; a burning hot coal applied to the lips, one of the more sensitive areas of the body. Yet, nothing is written that Isaiah reacted in pain. Either there was no pain, because of a special blessing by God, or the pain did not matter because of the majesty of the surroundings and the goodness of the cleansing.³⁹

God's purging agent touched Isaiah's mouth, and the angelic messenger assured the prophet that he had been completely cleansed of his uncleanness. We might call this Isaiah's conversion experience. Compare Acts. 9:3-11, which records the Apostle Paul's conversion and call.⁴⁰

I Am Ruined

Isaiah also saw God's holiness. And his reaction was to realize his own unholiness. After a five-chapter-long ministry of telling people "Woe is you," Isaiah said, "Woe is me." Although Isaiah was probably the most righteous guy in Judah at the time, when he caught a glimpse of God's holiness, he knew that he was sinful sludge.

Simon Peter also had a similar reaction. He...

Luke 5:8 *...fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"*

Job said, Job 42:5-6 *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes."*

And when John saw Jesus in Revelation, he wrote,

Rev. 1:17 *When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man...*

When you are truly confronted with God's holiness, there is no possibility of pride. There is only a complete poverty of spirit, a realization that even what we thought was righteousness is just filthy rags. Fortunately, that's the best place to be. Jesus said,

Matt. 5:3 *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

That is exactly the place that God wants us to be, for when we cry out to Him about our unrighteousness, it is then that He is able to cleanse us.⁴¹

³⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁹ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

⁴⁰ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁴¹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

Your Sin Is Forgiven

Isaiah cried out because of his unclean lips. Now, it's very possible that Isaiah realized that he had a problem with gossip, or lying, or profanity. But it's also possible that Isaiah was realizing that God's Holy Word had been communicated through his own unclean mouth. When he finally saw God Himself, Isaiah must have been horrified to think of his own sinful mouth as the conduit for the Words of such a holy God.

But then his lips were touched by a burning coal of the altar. His iniquity was taken away, and his sin was forgiven. There was nothing that Isaiah could do to cleanse himself. All he could do was confess his sin. The same is true for us. All we can do with our unclean lips is confess our sin. Fortunately,

1John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

The cleansing, the forgiveness, is not because of what we have done, but because of what was done for us.⁴²

Isaiah had a personal Day of Atonement before the Lord (Lev. 23:26–32). taken away: This word alludes to the Israelite practice of symbolically placing the sins of the people on a scapegoat and driving that goat into the wilderness (see Lev. 16). The Hebrew word translated purged means “covered” and is the same word that is translated atonement. The word refers to the process of killing an animal and sprinkling the blood on the altar for atonement.⁴³

⁸Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am I*; send me.

Notice the “us.” (Trinity again.)

[Here am I; send me] Never did a man (nor could a man) answer the call of God more quickly than Isaiah. Seven men who were slow to obey:

1. Moses (Ex. 3-4)
2. Barak (Judg. 4-5)
3. Gideon (Judg. 6)
4. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10)
5. Jonah (Jonah 1:1-17)
6. Balaam (Num. 22)
7. Peter (Jn. 21:15-24; Acts 10:9-22)

It is interesting that up to this time Isaiah had never heard the call of God. I think many Christians have never felt like they were called to do anything for God because they have never been cleansed. They have not seen this great need as Christians. God is not going to use a dirty vessel; I can assure you of that. It is true that God does bless His Word even when it is given out by those who are playing around with sin, but in time God judges them severely. I don't dare mention any names, but I have known certain ministers who for a while enjoyed the blessing of God. Then they got into sin, and it wasn't long until the judgment of God fell upon them.

⁴² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

⁴³ Nelson Study Bible

Isaiah heard God's call: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" I don't need to call attention to the fact that you have both the singular and the plural in this verse, and I believe it sets forth the Trinity. Isaiah's response was, "Here am I; send me." Isaiah heard God's call for the first time and responded to it, as a cleansed individual will do. There are too many people today who are asked to do something in the church who first of all ought to get cleansed and straightened out with the Lord. They need to have their lips touched with a living coal. They need to confess the sins in their lives, because their service will be sterile and frustrating until that takes place.

Now notice the commission to Isaiah:⁴⁴

God then asked for a volunteer to serve Him, evidently among any present in the throne room (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-20). "Us" is a plural, and the plural in Hebrew (but in no other Semitic languages) adds intensification (cf. Gen. 1:26; 11:7; 1 Kings 22:19-23). It only hints at plurality within the Godhead, but the New Testament makes that plurality clear (cf. John 12:41; Acts 28:25). This may be a plural of majesty, or the Lord may have meant Himself, the seraphim, and the heavenly host. Note the balance of divine sovereignty and human choice in His words: He would send someone, but that someone needed to be willing to go. God's grace to him in not consuming him, but rather cleansing him, motivated Isaiah to volunteer to be God's servant.

This section is a major revelation of the grace of God and the condition for spiritual cleansing. It is one of the premier salvation passages in the Old Testament. God's grace on this occasion so impacted Isaiah that his ministry bore this hallmark, as we observe in this book.

"Here in this matchless passage we find the reason why so few are willing to serve God. They need above all the conviction of sin. Only when a man has been convicted of sin and has understood that the Redeemer has borne the guilt of his sin is he willing and ready joyfully to serve God, to go wherever God may call him.

Many preachers of this passage have pointed out that the order of events is very significant. First, after gaining a greater appreciation for God's holiness and his own sinfulness, Isaiah said "woe," acknowledging his own uncleanness. Second, the seraphim said "lo" ("behold" in the NASB), pointing to God's provision for cleansing. Third, God said "go" (v. 9), giving the prophet a mission to fulfill.⁴⁵

Here Am I, Send Me!

Isaiah has seen God's holiness, realized his own sinfulness, and received gracious forgiveness. And so when he hears that God is looking for someone to send, Isaiah eagerly volunteers: "Here am I. Send me!"

Are you someone who has realized God's holiness and your sinfulness? Have you received God's gracious forgiveness? Most of us here no doubt would say yes. I wonder, then, why so few here have responded by saying, "Here am I. Send me!"

Very few missionaries. Very few answering the call to full-time ministry. Very few even volunteering to do part-time ministry. It's not like there's a lack of ministry to be done. Jesus told the disciples, Luke 10:2-3 ... *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."*

⁴⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Jesus basically told them, "There are very few workers to do the ministry. So I want you to pray that the Lord will send workers. And when you pray, you'll realize that it's you He's calling, so go." If only we would all pray and then go work in the field of ministry.⁴⁶

At times, the prophets would be invited to participate in the heavenly court (see 1 Kin. 22:19–22; Jer. 23:18, 22). Here the Lord uses the pronoun Us to mean Himself and His angels (see Gen. 3:22; 11:7). Send me: In ancient Middle Eastern religions only divine beings are sent as messengers of the gods. Yet the God of Scripture uses human beings as a matter of course. Only at certain times does He use angels in a direct way to reveal His will to humankind. Isaiah's willingness proceeded from a grateful heart; he wanted to serve the God who had forgiven him (v. 7).⁴⁷

⁹And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

[9-10] Mt 13:14,15; Jn 12:39-41; Acts 28:25-27; Acts 15:13-18; Amos 4:11-12.

[Go, and tell this people] This was not Isaiah's original commission, but his special call for this great dispensational prophecy, which is quoted seven times in the N.T. of Jews in the days of Christ and the apostles (Mt. 13:14-15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; Jn. 12:39-40; Acts 28:26-27; Rom. 11:8).⁴⁸

The message Isaiah is told to give is very, very strange. "This people" means, of course, the nation of Israel.⁴⁹

God sent Isaiah back to the people among whom he lived, a people with unclean lips (v. 5). He was to tell them to listen and to look at the revelations he brought from God, but they would not fully understand what the prophet meant (cf. Deut. 29:2-4).

Does God really want to prevent people from understanding, repenting, and being healed? This verse and the next are strongly ironic. We could paraphrase Isaiah's message to the Israelites as follow: "Go ahead; be stubborn!"⁵⁰

Dull Ears And Dim Eyes

God commissioned Isaiah to go preach to the Jews. But He also told Isaiah that they wouldn't receive it. Jesus quoted these verses when the disciples asked Him why He had begun to speak in parables.

Matt. 13:13-14 "*... I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE'*"

⁴⁶ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

⁴⁷ Nelson Study Bible

⁴⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁰ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Jesus was teaching in parables. Basically telling stories of comparison - placing two things next to each other. Using a simple truth to illustrate a more complex one. When asked why, He said that some people can't or won't understand the parables. Not because He was trying to disguise the truth, but because He had made it so plainly obvious that those who were dull of hearing and dim of seeing became blatantly obvious.

I remember a recording class I took in college. Having been in loud rock bands for years, there are certain frequencies that had long since been blasted out of my ability to hear. But nobody in the class would possibly have any way of knowing that. But one day, the teacher was using a frequency generator to illustrate different tones. He happened to hit upon a frequency that I could not hear. I kept asking him to turn it up. I was convinced that if it was just a little louder, if I could just know what sound I was listening for, I was sure that then I could hear it. Pretty soon, everyone in the class had their hands over their ears, some even doubling up in pain, and I'm asking, "can you just turn it up a little more so I can hear it?"

When the truth of the Word is preached, those who are dull of hearing and dim of seeing became blatantly obvious.

1Cor. 1:18 *For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

1Cor. 2:14 *...a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*⁵¹

Probably Isaiah, responding as he did in verse 8, thought that his serving the Lord would result in the nation's cleansing. However, the Lord told him his message would not result in much spiritual response. The people had not listened before and they would not listen now. The Lord did not delight in judging His people, but discipline was necessary because of their disobedience. In fact, the people, on hearing Isaiah's message, would become even more hardened against the Lord. Interestingly six of the seven lines in verse 10 are in a chiasm: heart ears eyes are mentioned in lines 1-3, and in lines 4-6 they are reversed: eyes ears hearts. This is a common arrangement of material in the Old Testament. Possibly this pattern emphasizes the "eyes," mentioned in the middle. Jesus quoted part of this verse to explain that Israel in His day could not believe because they would not believe (see comments on John 12:40).⁵²

¹⁰Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

[understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed] Three blessings of right seeing and hearing:

1. Understanding with the heart (Isa. 6:10)
2. Conversion to God and the gospel
3. Healing of the body

⁵¹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0601.php>

⁵² Bible Knowledge Commentary

That conversion and healing of the body go hand in hand is clear here (cp. Mt. 8:16-17; 9:1-8; 13:14-15; Jn. 10:10; Jas. 5:14-16; 1Pet. 2:24). That such is physical healing is also clear in these passages. The prophecy was fulfilled with physical healing.⁵³

At first glance it looks as if the prophet is being sent to those who are blind, deaf, and hardened people, but I think I can safely say that God never hardens hearts that would otherwise be soft. God simply brings the hardness to the surface; He does not make the heart hard. He does not make blind the eyes of those who want to see, but apart from His intervention they would never see. Nothing but the foolish blasphemy of men would say that God hardens or blinds. Isaiah's job was to take a message of light to the people. Light merely reveals the blindness of the people. In darkness they do not know if they are blind or not. Matthew 13:14-15 records the words of our Lord: "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Let me illustrate this. When I was a boy in Oklahoma, I used to have to milk a stubborn old cow. When it grew dark early in the evenings, I would have to take a lantern out to the barn with me. When I reached the corncrib two things would happen. The rats ran for cover -- I could hear them taking off -- and the little birds that were roosting up in the rafters would begin to twitter around and sing. The presence of light caused one to flee and the other to sing. Now, did the light make a rat a rat? No. He was a rat before the light got there. The light only revealed that he was a rat. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, He was the Light of the world. In His presence two things happened: He caused the birds to sing and the rats to run.

Let me illustrate this same thought with another story. Years ago there was a big explosion in a mine in West Virginia, and many men were blocked off in the mine because of the cave-ins. After several days a rescue party dug through to the trapped men. And one of the first things they managed to get through to them was a light. After the light came on, a fine young miner said, "Why doesn't someone turn on a light?" The other miners looked at him startled, suddenly realizing that he had been blinded by the explosion. But it took a light to reveal that he was blind. God blinds nobody. He hardens no heart. When the light shines in, it reveals what an individual is, and that is what Isaiah means. That is exactly why the Lord Jesus Christ quoted this passage. Paul wrote, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2Cor. 2:14-16). I have often said, as I have given an invitation to receive Christ, "If you have rejected Christ -- if you come into this church as a lost person and are leaving a lost person -- I am no longer your friend, because you cannot now go into the presence of God and say that you never heard the gospel."

You see, the light of the gospel revealed that they were blind, and they rejected Jesus Christ. He didn't make them blind, but He only revealed their blindness.

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" -- we always triumph. There are those who like to boast of the number who are being saved, but I would much

⁵³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

rather boast of the fact that thousands and even several millions of people are hearing the Word of God. My business is sowing the seed, the Word of God. It is the business of the Spirit of God to touch the hearts of those who hear.⁵⁴

The effect of Isaiah's preaching would not be that the people would repent, but that they would harden their hearts against his messages (cf. Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-41; Acts 28:26-27; Rom. 11:8).

The Apostle John quoted this verse (and 53:1) in reference to the Jews' inability in Jesus' day to believe on Him (John 12:40). John then added, "These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him" (John 12:41). Isaiah may or may not have realized that his words had prophetic significance, in addition to being applicable to his own situation.

". . . this chapter immediately follows and precedes examples of wrong reaction to God's word [5:24; 7:10-12]."

God told Moses before he went to Pharaoh with the Lord's message that the Egyptian king would harden his heart (Exod. 3:19). From the divine viewpoint, God had raised Pharaoh up to demonstrate His sovereignty and power in liberating the Israelites. However, from the human viewpoint, Pharaoh had the freedom to choose to submit to God or resist. His freedom was not complete; human freedom never is. We cannot do everything we want to do. But his freedom was genuine; he really could have submitted to Yahweh. God justly held him responsible for his choice because he did have genuine, though limited, freedom.

In both cases, Moses' commission and Isaiah's, God was not ruling out the possibility of repentance from the start. He was letting His prophet see beforehand what the outcome of his ministry would be. In both cases, too, those who heard God's Word had the opportunity and the ability to respond to it positively, but they chose to respond negatively.

Consequently, God as their Judge hardened their hearts so that they became harder, and eventually it became impossible for them to repent (Exod. 10:1; cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Heb. 6:4-6). The Israelites in Isaiah's day had already hardened their hearts against the Lord, and His retributive judgment on them had already begun when Isaiah received his commission.

"The elect are not saved because they are creatures of light; they too were creatures of darkness and in them there was no goodness, nothing that would attract the light. God, however, out of His mere good pleasure did choose them and ordain them to life eternal, and when the blessed gospel was heard by them, they were given a heart that was then willing and able to hear and to respond. Those, however, whom God did not ordain to life eternal, He passed by and for their sin ordained to dishonor and wrath."

The success of our ministry should not be our prime motivation to continue in the work of the gospel. Our loving commitment to remain faithful to the Lord who has graciously saved us and called us into His service, despite our lack of outward success, should be.⁵⁵

Paradoxically, Isaiah's preaching to the religious and arrogant people who keep on hearing was destined to make their ears heavy (42:20). Only the humble would understand the Lord's message. The more the prophet would proclaim the word of God, the less response he would get from the people. This was a call to a very discouraging ministry. In truth, the call of God is for faithfulness to Him, to His word, and to the call itself.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵⁶ Nelson Study Bible

¹¹Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

[Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate] Until five things be fulfilled (Isa. 6:11-12):

1. Cities of Judah without inhabitants
2. Houses of Judah without inhabitants
3. The land (Palestine) utterly desolate of Jews
4. The Lord has removed Judah far away.
5. There is a great apostasy in Judah.

This had a double fulfillment -- in the Babylonian captivity and the Roman (2Ki. 25; 2Chr. 36; Jer. 25; Lk. 20:20-24).⁵⁷

God told Isaiah that the people would listen but not learn from his message because their hearts had become hardened beyond repentance. God's patience with their chronic rebellion was finally exhausted. His judgment was to abandon them to their rebellion and hardness of heart. Why did God send Isaiah if he knew the people wouldn't listen? Although the nation itself would not repent and would reap judgment, some individuals would listen. In 6:13 God explains his plan for a remnant (holy seed) of faithful followers. God is merciful even when he judges. We can gain encouragement from God's promise to preserve his people. If we are faithful to him, we can be sure of his mercy.⁵⁸

Lord, how long? This is a logical question from anyone who is given such a difficult commission. I have to preach to those who won't hear, and their rejection of my message will ultimately seal their doom? How long will I have to serve in that kind of ministry?

The answer: Preach until destruction comes (Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant). Preach in hope of the restoration of a remnant (yet a tenth will be in it, and will return). Even though Isaiah's ministry was difficult, it was not without hope.

The news that the Israelites would harden their hearts against Isaiah's message undoubtedly disappointed the prophet. So he asked the Lord how long he should continue to preach (cf. v. 9) and how long the Israelites would be unresponsive (cf. v. 10).

The Lord did not give him a certain number of years but implied that he should continue preaching until the full extent of God's judgment on the people because of their prolonged unresponsiveness had come. The penalty for resisting—that the Lord set forth in the Mosaic Covenant—culminated in military defeat and exile from the Promised Land (Lev. 18:25-27; Deut. 28:21, 63; 29:28). The Lord took full responsibility for this judgment, though He used other nations as His instruments to execute it.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁸ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

12And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

[forsaking in the midst of the land] Forsaking of homes and country by reason of captivity among all nations (Lk. 21:20-24).⁶⁰

13But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

“Substance”: 04678 matssebeth {mats-tseh'-beth} n f; pillar 4, substance 2; 6.

Pillar, mastaba, stump, pillar; as monument, personal memorial; with an Altar; (Hoph) stock, stump (of tree). Stump = Root of Jesse.

When would the people listen? Only after they had come to the end and had nowhere to turn but to God. This would happen when the land was destroyed by invading armies and the people taken into captivity. The "tenth" refers either to those who remained in the land after the captivity or to those who returned from Babylon to rebuild the land. Each group was about a tenth of the total population. When will we listen to God? Must we, like Judah, go through calamities before we will listen to God's words? Consider what God may be telling you, and obey him before time runs out.⁶¹

And be for consuming: The remnant will indeed return, but even the remnant will eventually be judged. Israel was not done being disobedient when she returned from the Babylonian captivity, and God was not done bringing His judgment on a disobedient Israel.⁶²

The devastation, great as it was to be, would not be total; but even its survivors would have to submit to further judgment. The illustration from nature, however, introduces an element of hope. (Grogan)

Also, chapter 6 provides a good transition into the prophecies that appear next, in chapters 7—39 and, particularly, in chapters 7—12. It shows how the sinful nation could become the Lord's servant (a kingdom of priests), namely, by really looking to Yahweh and allowing Him to deal with her sin, as Isaiah did. It also explains the hardness of Israel that follows; she had not looked to God and had not responded appropriately to Him, as Isaiah did. In the call of Isaiah (Isa. 6) his message stands out, but in the call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1-10) his person stands out.⁶³

⁶⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶¹ Life Application Study Bible.

⁶² <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-6.html>

⁶³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Yet there was hope. A tenth of the nation would survive. The Lord would take His tithe from among the people. But the land would again face judgment. This "tenth" probably refers to the remnant left in the land when Nebuchadnezzar took the majority captive to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14).

When the nation was thoroughly cut down and burned, there would be a little spiritual life in it that would eventually sprout. This happened when a small number of godly exiles under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and Ezra returned to the land and reestablished the nation. Antiochus IV of Syria almost consumed even this remnant during the inter-testamental period, when the land was again subject to burning. They were the initial holy seed (cf. 41:8; 43:5; 53:10; 59:21; 65:9; 66:22; 1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:5), but Messiah would be the ultimate holy seed who would arise out of the chastened nation.⁶⁴

Then Isaiah asks the Lord, "How long?" In other words, "How long are people going to deafly reject your Word? How long will they turn a blind eye to Your Truth?" God answers that they will not repent until they have been removed from the land. Of course with hindsight, we are well aware of the fact that the Babylonian Captivity will take place. The people will not repent until they have been in Babylon for seventy years.

⁶⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>