

## Isaiah 6

*Is. 6:1 In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.*

Isaiah was called to his prophetic office *In the year of King Uzziah's death*. The economy had flourished during Uzziah's reign (2 Chronicles 26:3-15), but pride set in, evidenced by his attempt to *burn incense in the temple* (2 Chronicles 26:16). God struck him with *leprosy* for his disobedience, and he remained *a leper to the day of his death* (2 Chronicles 26:17-21). We can only imagine, therefore, how God was perceived by the inhabitants of Judah—even Isaiah. The king whose reforms had brought about a thriving economy had been severely chastised by God for what many considered a minor offense. God's reputation, therefore, was suspect among many within the land. Consider too that Isaiah had spent much time observing King Uzziah, for he had even been privileged to write a biography of the king's life (2 Chronicles 26:22). We, therefore, should momentarily place ourselves in Isaiah's position and consider the fallout from such a time as this. Not only did he have all of the above to think about, but his ministry would be rejected by his own people as well (read 6:9-13). Jehovah had to do something extraordinary to encourage this man of God, so keep this backdrop in mind as you study, not only this chapter, but every chapter of this most intriguing testimony to the One who rules over all.

Considering King Uzziah's death, along with the public's negative perception of God that resulted, can you imagine what ran through Isaiah's mind as he *saw the Lord* in the heavenly *temple*? But what does Isaiah mean when he states that he *saw the Lord*, especially when both Exodus 19:21 and Exodus 33:20 confirm that no man can *see God's essence and live*. Even Moses was allowed to *see* only His *back*—never His essence (Exodus 33:21-23). John, the disciple of Jesus, also confirms that *No man has seen God at any time* (John 1:18). Paul states basically the same in writing to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:16). What then did Isaiah see? He saw the Messiah, who is the *glory* of God (John 12:39-41), *the image of the invisible God* (Colossians 1:15), yet *God Himself* (Hebrews 1:8), God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. One thing was certain. Unlike King Uzziah, the King that Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6 would not sin under any circumstance, regardless of the degree of temptation.

When God manifested Himself to Isaiah, He did so with such magnificence that *the train of His robe filled the entire heavenly temple* (the earthly tabernacle was only *a copy and shadow* of this *heavenly temple*—Hebrews 8:4-5). The *train* pointed to God's power and majesty—His ability to rule and reign righteously as the only Sovereign of the universe—confirming that what He does is always right and proper.

If anything should have confirmed Isaiah's call, not only to himself but also to the people, it was the fact that he was allowed to see what he saw in this chapter. It was enough for Isaiah, but it was not enough for the people, for they (generally) rejected his words and opted out for that which they deemed proper.

*Is. 6:2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*

The *Seraphim stood above* God, *each having six wings*. There are three orders of angelic beings: cherubim (the highest order, who possess *four wings*—Ezekiel 10:20-21), *seraphim* (the next highest in order, possessing *six wings*—Isaiah 6:2), and angels (the lowest order, who possess no wings). Notice that the *seraphim* are male in gender (*he*), as are all angelic beings, and only *two* of the *six wings* are required for flight.

*Is. 6:3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."*

Obviously, in making reference to God as "*Holy, Holy, Holy,*" the seraphim were emphasizing God's holiness—something that Isaiah needed to hear given his present situation. The seraphim will be saying the same when the events of Revelation 4:5-11 transpire, confirming that God's holiness always remains the same. Note that it is not just one of these creatures stating these things, but all four of them.

The phrase, "*Lord of hosts*" (Isaiah 6:3), emphasizes God's omnipotence (power), another thing that Isaiah would need to value as he served as a prophet to the southern kingdom. (God is described as "*The Almighty*" in Revelation 4:8, again emphasizing His power.) It is because of God's holiness (and all His other flawless attributes), that *glory* is manifested when He shows up (Exodus 3:1-5 is a perfect example). Because God's *glory* fills *The whole earth* (v.3), Isaiah could never escape His presence (all of creation reveals His *attributes...*, *power*, and *divine nature*—Romans 1:20). He, therefore, being sovereign and omnipresent, could protect and guide Isaiah in any and every circumstance. And guess what? The same applies to our lives today. How comforting!

*Is. 6:4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.*

The seraphim that spoke did so with such authority that *the foundations of the...temple...thresholds trembled*. The *smoke* mentioned here was either the glory of the Lord (Exodus 19:18) or the incense *smoke* of the praise and worship of the beings giving glory to God (*incense* being the symbol of prayer—Psalm 141:2). Seeing this, Isaiah would have been reminded of King Uzziah's disobedience and how proper it was for God to chasten the king for his insubordination.

*Is. 6:5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."*

When Isaiah saw the Lord, he said, "*Woe is me, for I am ruined.*" "*Ruined*" means, "to cease, to be cut off, to be put out of existence." Therefore Isaiah, as a result of seeing the Lord, expected to die (as did those addressed in Genesis 16:13, 32:30, Judges 6:22-23 and 13:21-22). Not only did Isaiah expect death as a result of seeing *the Lord*, but he also expected it due to his *unclean lips*. Unlike the seraphim, whose lips only stated proper things concerning who God is (*Holy, Holy, Holy*—v.3), Isaiah's *lips* were sinful and, consequently, *unclean* (King Uzziah should have said the same thing about himself once he was leprous—that he was *Unclean*—Leviticus 13:45). Isaiah had evidently been speaking evil against the Lord (along with the people) due to His judgment against King Uzziah (read the notes associated with verse 1). Because of God's holiness, Isaiah's sin, as well as the sin of the people, was very noticeable while in God's presence. And how does such an account apply to us today? If we should find ourselves blending in with the world system (the manner in which it thinks, what it stands for, and etc.), it simply means that we have failed to spend ample time alone with God. One thing is certain. Our standard for righteous living is to be based on God and His holiness—never on how other believers are conducting themselves (2 Corinthians 10:12). Job learned this the hard way, for so long as he compared himself with his peers he failed to see his own sin. It wasn't until Job 42:1-6 that he finally got the message and repented of his misdeeds.

Keep in mind that when Isaiah states, “*For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,*” it was Jesus whom he had seen, as was made clear in verse 1.

*Is. 6:6 ¶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs.*

*One of the seraphim took a burning coal from the altar in the heavenly temple and flew to Isaiah. It was taken from the altar because that is where Jesus’ blood would be offered after the cross (Hebrews 9:11-14)—and Isaiah’s sins most definitely needed to be dealt with. Note: Old Testament believers’ sins were only covered (atoned for) before the cross. After the cross, however, they were removed. The notes associated with Isaiah 6:7 addresses this subject in more detail.*

*Is. 6:7 And he touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.”*

The seraphim *touched* Isaiah’s *lips* with the coal from the altar in heaven. Why? Because this was the area of Isaiah’s life that he was most aware of his sin (he had stated in verse 5 that he was *a man of unclean lips*). Isaiah’s sin was not actually forgiven—it was only atoned for, or covered (the meaning of the Hebrew here). It was through the cross of Jesus that Isaiah’s sin was eventually removed. In fact, all Old Testament believers’ sins were only atoned for (covered) until the cross. Consequently, all Old Testament believers went to *Abraham’s bosom*, or Paradise, when they died (Luke 16:19-31) and were not taken to heaven until after Jesus’ crucifixion.

*Is. 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

Isaiah’s commission is given in verses 8-10. Notice that the Lord did not ask Isaiah this question until his sin had been atoned for (through the events described in the previous verse). God sends out men who walk in a sanctified manner—who deal with their transgressions and hate their sin. Notice too that the plural “*Us*” is used here along with the singular “*I*,” pointing to the plurality of the Godhead. Isaiah references the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) in Isaiah 48:16, so the notes associated with that verse would be helpful for additional input. Would it not have been interesting to have heard Isaiah’s voice inflection when he stated, “*Here am I. Send me*”?

*Is. 6:9 And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’*

God reveals to Isaiah that the *people* will not repent as he serves in the office of prophet. In other words, they will not heed Isaiah’s message. Isaiah wasn’t alone when it came to having his words rejected (read Ezekiel 33:30-32 for just one example of the many examples in the prophets).