

# Isaiah's Calling

Isaiah 6

By Scott Huckaby

8/7/2022

**BIG BEND  
BIBLE  
FELLOWSHIP**

## 6:1-4 – What Isaiah saw & heard.

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup>And one cried to another and said:*

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;*

*The whole earth is full of His glory!”*

*<sup>4</sup>And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.*

## What do we know about King Uzziah?

King Uzziah of Judah had a long and distinguished reign, described in 2 Chronicles 26 and in 2 Kings 15:1-7 (Uzziah is called Azariah in 2 Kings 15).

- Uzziah began reigning at 16 years old, and he reigned 52 years. Overall, he was a good king.
- Uzziah led Israel in military victories over the Philistines and others as a strong king.
- 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.

Thus, Isaiah had good reason to be disillusioned at the death of King Uzziah; a great king had tragic end. He may have thought: Where was the LORD in all this?

## So, where was the Lord in all this?

*I saw the LORD sitting on a throne:* The LORD was sitting on a throne! God was still enthroned in heaven, and was still in charge of all creation.

- God in heaven shows Isaiah, "Don't worry about it, Isaiah. Uzziah may not be on his throne, but I am on My throne."

## What does it tell us that there is a throne in heaven?

The LORD God sits upon it as the sovereign ruler of the universe! Sovereign kings & judges sit on thrones; those with proper authority and sovereignty sit on thrones.

## Who else has had of vision of God on His throne?

The prophet Michaiah (1 Kings 22:19), Job (Job 26:9), David (Psalm 9:4 and 7, 11:4), the Sons of Korah (Psalm 45:6, 47:8), Ethan the Ezrahite (Psalm 89:14), Jeremiah (Lamentations 5:19), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:26, 10:1), Daniel (Daniel 7:9), and the Apostle John (Revelation 4:1-11).

- God's throne is mentioned >35 times in Revelation!

## What throne do atheists and humanist recognize?

- Atheists or materialists believe there is no throne; no seat of authority or power the universe and thus there is no one to whom they must answer.
- Humanists regard man to be on the throne; they must only answer to other people or even themselves (follow your heart).

## How was the throne described?

*High and lifted up:* The throne was exalted and majestic. The throne set its Occupant in a superior position.

## What does the train of His robe tell us?

*The train of His robe filled the temple:* It was symbolic: Kings of that time would wear robes with long trains, because they were difficult to maneuver and work in.

- A long train meant, I am important enough that I don't have to work, others must serve & wait on me. Essentially, the same is said when a bride wears a dress with a long train today.

## Who attended the throne?

*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.

### **Are cherubim and seraphim the same beings?**

The name seraphim means, "burning ones."

Ezekiel 1:13 describes cherubim – *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!

### **What was the purpose of the six wings?**

In Revelation 4:8, the Apostle John also mentions their six wings. Two to cover his face (to show they are too lowly to look upon the LORD), two more to cover his feet (to hide this "humble" area of the body, so nothing even possibly deficient is seen in the LORD's presence), and two more so each can fly.

### **What was the problem with looking at the Lord?**

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.

### **Aren't the holy angels sinless?**

#### **Why would they have to cover themselves?**

The seraph remembers that even though sinless he is still a creature, and therefore he conceals himself in recognition of his nothingness and unworthiness in the presence of the Holy One.

- 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.

### **What is the lesson learned here that we should apply to our lives?**

We shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverent and humbled in his presence.

- As Mary at Jesus' feet was preferred to Martha and her serving, so must sacred reverence take the first place, and energetic service follow in due course.

### **v3 – To whom were the seraphim directing their cries of holy, holy, holy?**

*One cried to another:* The seraphim are not even directly addressing the LORD God here. They are proclaiming His glorious nature and character to one another, in the presence of the LORD.

### **Why did the seraphim repeat "holy" three times?**

Once wasn't enough. They say it three times because there are Three Persons in the One God.

- The doctrine of the Trinity is hinted at in the Old Testament but made clearer in the New.
- In the Hebrew language, intensity is communicated by repetition. To say, holy, holy, holy is to declare the Lord's holiness in the highest possible degree.

### **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. A person is holy if they are set apart for God's will and purpose.

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

### **What is the Lord set apart from?**

He is set apart from creation, in that the Lord is not a creature, and He exists outside of all creation.

- If all creation were to dissolve, the Lord 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. He is not merely smarter than any man, stronger than any man, older than any man, or better than any man.
- You can't measure God on man's chart at all. He is Divine, and we are human.

### **Since God is so holy, how could He add humanity to His deity as Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity?**

Since people were 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. Unfallen humanity is not deity, but it is compatible with it.

### **How could the seraphim say, *the whole earth is full of His glory*?**

The seraphim surrounding the throne of God could see this probably more clearly than Isaiah could. We are often blind to the obvious glory of God all around us.

Romans 1:20 – *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead*

### **How do we see the Creator in the creation?**

- If there is a creation, there had to be a creator
- Example trees: lavish, diverse, dependent, in harmony
- Irreducible complexity evidence of design

**What does it tell us that, *the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out?***

The seraphim are majestic beings, and their voice carries weight. When they speak, the door posts of God's throne room shake! The idea may be that Isaiah was watching from the door way, and when the seraphim cried out, he could feel the door posts shake.

**What does the house being filled with smoke tell us?**

This smoke reminds us of the pillar of cloud that represented the presence of God (Exodus 13:21-22), the smoke on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18), and the cloud of God's Shekinah glory that filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10-12). A cloud of glory often marks the presence of the LORD.

**6:5-7 – Isaiah's cleansing.**

<sup>5</sup> So I said: "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 my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

**What made Isaiah feel like he was coming apart?**

*Woe is me, for I am undone!* Two things. First, the sight and sound of the seraphim. Second, the vision of God.

Exodus 33:20 – *He [the Lord] said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."*

When Isaiah saw the angels, in all their holy humility, obedience, and praise to God, he realized not only that he was unlike the Lord, he was also unlike the angels.

- The more clearly he saw the LORD, the more clearly he saw how bad his state was before Him.
- Isaiah's deep sense of depravity is consistent with the experience of other godly men in the presence of the LORD. Job (Job 42:5-6), Daniel (Daniel 10:15-17), Peter (Luke 5:8) and John (Revelation 1:17) each had similar experiences.

**What specifically made Isaiah feel so sinful in the presence of the Lord?**

*I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips:* Isaiah saw his sinfulness, and the sinfulness of his people, mainly in terms of their sinful speech.

**How is what we say sinful?**

By nature, our lips are full of flattery and false intent:

*With flattering lips and a double heart they speak* (Psalm 12:2).

By nature, our lips lie and are proud:

*Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous* (Psalm 31:18).

By nature, our lips deceive:

*Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit* (Psalm 34:13).

By nature, our lips are violent:

*Swords are in their lips* (Psalm 59:7).

By nature, our lips bring death to others:

*The poison of asps is under their lips* (Psalm 140:3).

**v6 – How did the seraphim minister to Isaiah?**

*One of the seraphim flew to me:* 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.

**What was the purpose of the altar in heaven?**

This must be heaven's version of the altar of incense that was set before the holy of holies in the tabernacle of God (Exodus 30:1-10). We know that the earthly tabernacle God instructed Moses to build was made after the pattern of a heavenly reality (Exodus 25:9).

- The throne is for God; that is where He rules and reigns. The altar is for us; that is where we find cleansing and purging from sin.

**Why didn't Isaiah cry out in pain when the hot coal touched his lips?**

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.

**Why was a hot coal from the altar used to cleanse Isaiah?**

Isaiah knew he did not serve the LORD like these seraphim, the burning ones. So God said, "I will light a fire in you, also!" God, who is a consuming fire, can only fitly be served by those who are on fire, whether they be angels or men.

*Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged:* Isaiah's sin had to be burned away; the fire of judgment was applied to his place of sin.

- This was obviously a spiritual transaction. If one has a sinful mouth, it will do nothing to place a burning hot coal on their lips.

### **What is the principle here that works on our behalf in regard to Jesus' work on Calvary?**

Our sin was placed upon Him, and He was burned with the fire of God's judgment. Yet because He was holy and righteous Himself, the fire of God's judgment did not harm Him; it only burned away the sin, our sin.

### **Why did God cleanse Isaiah?**

Once Isaiah had met with the LORD, been convicted of his sin, and cleansed from its guilt, then he was ready to serve God...

### **6:8-13 – The commission of the prophet.**

<sup>8</sup> *Also 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."*

<sup>9</sup> *And He said, "Go, and tell this people:*

*'Keep on hearing, but do not understand;*

*Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'*

<sup>10</sup> *"Make the heart of this people dull,*

*And their ears heavy,*

*And shut their eyes;*

*Lest they see with their eyes,*

*And hear with their ears,*

*And understand with their heart,*

*And return and be healed."*

<sup>11</sup> *Then I said, "Lord, how long?"*

*And He answered:*

*"Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant,*

*The houses are without a man,*

*The land is utterly desolate,*

<sup>12</sup> *The Lord has removed men far away,*

*And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.*

<sup>13</sup> *But yet a tenth will be in it,*

*And will return and be for consuming,*

*As a terebinth tree or as an oak,*

*Whose stump remains when it is cut down.*

*So the holy seed shall be its stump."*

### **Why did God ask the question, whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?**

How strange it is that this God of majesty, sovereignty, and power asks for volunteers! He could easily create robots to do His work, or command angels to carry out His will. But God wants willing, surrendered servants. He looks for volunteers!

### **Why does God use His people to represent Him?**

God blesses us by getting us involved in what He is doing. We have a divine commission to work with Him in helping others to know Him. There will be blessings and rewards to those who are obedient to that commission.

### **How do we see the Trinity in this passage?**

Who is sending? I or Us? It is the same Person speaking in both the singular and the plural. The use of the plural here is not just a quirk of royalty, it is a subtle Old Testament reference to the Triune Godhead.

### **How did Isaiah answer God's call?**

*Here am I! Send me:* Isaiah emphatically answered God's call. He did not hesitate. Isaiah wanted to be the answer to God's question.

### **What created this kind of heart in Isaiah?**

He had a heart that:

- had been in the presence of God.
- knew its own sinfulness.
- knew the need among the people, the need for God's word.
- had been touched by God's cleansing fire.
- heard God's heart to reach the nations.

### **v9 – What did God commission Isaiah to do?**

*Go and tell these people, "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing but do not perceive."* God told Isaiah to go and preach to a people who wouldn't respond, so that their guilt would be certain.

### **v10 – Who would want a ministry that made the heart of the people dull and shut their heavy eyes?**

That is why God had to call Isaiah... he wouldn't have thought of it on his own. Nobody would want this ministry but God did... it served His purpose and some would respond to make it worthwhile for them.

### **What does the Word of God do when it is received with open eyes, ears, and heart?**

*And understand with their heart, and return and be healed:* It makes us return to God, and it brings healing to our lives.

- If you are under the word of God and these things aren't happening to you, ask God to work with your eyes, ears, and heart!

### **v11 – How did Isaiah react to his commissioning?**

*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?"

### **What was God's answer to the *how long* question?**

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.

### **v13 – What was the tenth that would return?**

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

### **What hope was there in the reference to the deciduous trees?**

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... the tree would be green again.

### **When Isaiah saw the LORD, who did he see?**

He saw God in the Second Person of the Trinity, he saw Jesus before He added humanity to His deity. We know this because the Apostle John quotes Isaiah 6:10, and under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, adds: *These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him* (John 12:41).

### **What applications come to mind from our discussion today?**

- God is in control even when things appear to be out of control... God uses these occasions to drive us back to Him.
- Humility is the proper way to be in the presence of God... we should always remember who we are in relation to Him.
- Humility is necessary to serve God.
- Sin is often revealed in what we say... we should be very careful in what we say.
- The fire of God's judgment burns away the sin of those who trust in what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross.