



Sunday, June 12, 2022

Lesson Text: Isaiah 6:1-8; **Time of Action:** between 740 and 739 B.C.; **Place of Action:** Jerusalem

Golden Text: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

I. INTRODUCTION. This week's lesson emphasizes the greatness, power and holiness of God through a vision the LORD gave to the prophet Isaiah. What Isaiah experienced is referred to as a theophany, an appearance of God in a form that is visible to the human eye. This vision was an overwhelming presentation of God's holiness that left Isaiah feeling devastated by his own sinfulness. This is a good reminder to us to spend much time in the Word of God learning about Him so that we can gain a realistic view of Him for ourselves.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE LESSON. Isaiah, whose name means "*salvation of the LORD*," was the greatest of the writing prophets. He carried on his ministry in the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the reigns of four kings, possibly from 740 to 680 B.C., a period of about sixty years during which the Jews of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were



carried away into captivity by the Assyrians in about 722-721 B.C., and Judah was invaded by the Assyrians in 701 B.C. The Book of Isaiah opens with *"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."* This period was a time of transition for Judah. Uzziah had come to the throne when he was sixteen and ruled for fifty-two years (see II Chronicles 26:3). He was a godly king, and during his reign Judah prospered (see II Chronicles 26:4-15). However, later in his life, he became proud, usurped the ministry of the priesthood, and fell under God's judgment. He spent the last days of his life as a leper (see II Chronicles 26:16-23). Our lesson text takes place during the year that King Uzziah died and Judah was unfaithful to the LORD which would lead to Him sending them into captivity years later (see Isaiah 5:1-7).

III. ISAIAH'S VISION (Isaiah 6:1-4)

A. The nature of the vision (Isaiah 6:1-2).

1. (vs. 1). Our first verse says **"In 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."** Isaiah was the biographer of the great king Uzziah (see II Chronicles 26:1, 22). He dated his vision **"In the year that king Uzziah died"** which was approximately between 740 and 739 B.C. **Note: King Uzziah also called Azariah (see II Kings 14:21-22) was a godly king who enjoyed a**



long reign in Judah (see II Kings 14:21; II Chronicles 26:1-3). However, toward the end of his life he acted out of pride and took over the high priest's duties by burning incense in the temple (see II Chronicles 26:16-18). In His anger, God struck Uzziah with leprosy and he was a leper until his death (see II Chronicles 25:20-21). Isaiah goes on to say that in that same year **"I saw also the LORD."** According to Exodus 19:21 and 33:20, no man can see God and live. The New Testament states that no man has seen God at any time (see John 1:18; I Timothy 6:13-16). Is Isaiah contradicting these clear statements that no one has seen God? No, of course not. It seems clear that what Isaiah actually saw was a visible manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity—Yeshua, or Jesus, the Pre-incarnate (before He became flesh) Son of God. Isaiah saw what others before him and after him had seen, a visible manifestation of God (see John 12:36-41). This is the only way Isaiah could've survived seeing the LORD. Isaiah saw only what God wanted him to see and in a way that he could understand. **Note:** *Jesus appeared as the Angel of the LORD to believers during Old Testament times and in the New Testament as the Son of God He was visible to men. The appearances of Jesus as the Angel of the LORD are called Christophanies (see Genesis 16:9-12; Genesis 18:2, 17; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:1-22; Judges 2:1-4; 6:11-18; 13:3-23). This Angel is clearly identified with God Himself in His self-manifestation to men. In Genesis 31:11-13, the Angel of the LORD said to Jacob, "I am the God of Bethel" and in Exodus 3:2-6 the same Angel said to Moses, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham." In addition, the Angel of the LORD makes promises that only God Himself can make. He*



was not speaking for God, He was speaking as God. He said to Hagar, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly... (see Genesis 16:10). It is significant to note that in the New Testament there is no further reference to the Angel of the LORD. The Greek definite article "the" is used to identify an ordinary angel previously mentioned in the context (see Matthew 1:20, 24). In Isaiah's vision the LORD was "**sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.**" This refers to God's position of authority over His people. Isaiah also saw the LORD's "**train**" or the sweeping length of His robe, which speaks of royalty and majesty as it "**filled the temple.**" We are not told if the vision was of the temple in Jerusalem, or the heavenly temple. It most likely was the heavenly temple. David spoke of it when he said "*The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven...*" (see Psalms 11:4). **Note: There is some question as to whether this was Isaiah's initial call from God, since it appears in chapter 6 and is not recorded at the beginning of the book like Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 1:1-10) and others (see Ezekiel 1:1-28; 2:1; Hosea 1:1-2; Joel 1:1-3; Obadiah 1:1). Based on the remaining passages in the book, it is more likely that this was Isaiah's initial call to God's service. More importantly, the arrangement of chapters 1-5 is similar to the parable given in chapter 5. The message is given first, and then the source of the authority is given. Chapters 1-5 contain the heart of Isaiah's message and chapter 6 authenticates it.**

2. (vs. 2). In this verse, Isaiah continued to say "**Above 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." Hovering above the throne Isaiah saw "**seraphims**" or angelic beings.

We are not told how many there were, but we are told that "**each one had six wings; with twain (or two) he covered his face, and with twain (or two) he covered his feet, and with twain (or two) he did fly.**" Each "**seraphim**"

had "**six wings,**" two covered their faces, two covered their feet and two were used for flying. Covering these parts reveal their respect and humility as they worshipped the LORD on His throne. Having "**wings**" indicated that the "**seraphims**" were ready to go without delay wherever the One sitting on the throne commanded. **Note: This is the**

only place in Scripture that mentions "seraphim," so very little is known about them. However, they are different from cherubim in their appearance and activity (see Ezekiel 1:5-25; 10:8-15). The word "seraphim" comes from a word meaning "to burn." From this, many commentators generally see "seraphim" as fiery, brilliant, angelic creatures. They appear to be personal, spiritual beings, for they have faces, feet and hands. They use human speech and understand moral concepts. We must also remember that the "seraphim" may have appeared to Isaiah in a form he could readily understand. When we see them in heaven, their appearance may be different. In some ways the "seraphim" were similar to the cherubim, another angelic being mentioned in the Bible. Both are winged beings and surround God's throne. The difference appears to be in that the "seraphim" were vocal in their praise of God in Isaiah 6:3, saying "Holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." But nowhere in the Bible



do the cherubim break forth in such exuberant praise. The cherubim apparently played a quieter more restrained role in worship. It should also be noted that when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden, cherubim were placed at the east of the garden to guard the tree of life (see Genesis 3:24). In addition, Satan, or Lucifer was a cherub (see Ezekiel 28:14, 16) until he rebelled against God (see Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-19).

B. The message of the vision (Isaiah 6:3-4).

1. (vs. 3). This verse says **"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."** Isaiah caught a glimpse of the seraphim in uninterrupted worship and praise as they chanted to each other **"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts."** One of the outstanding facets of heaven will certainly be our ability to praise God without any of the distractions that hinder our worship here on earth. The Hebrew word translated **"holy"** means *"set apart for God's use"* and can be applied to things, places, and people. There is a moral aspect to holiness. God is totally pure and righteous, not only in a way that is apart from evil, but also in a way that is totally and actively at war with evil (see Ephesians 6:11-18). God's holiness left an indelible impression upon Isaiah. On twenty-nine occasions he referred to the LORD as *"the Holy One of Israel."* This title occurs only five other times in the Old Testament. **Note: It is said that uttering the word "holy" twice in Hebrew indicated the idea of being "most holy." Therefore, a threefold utterance of "holy, holy, holy" increases the**



intensity to mean the highest of the highest. Since human language is not capable of adequately describing the holiness of God, this is the best that can be offered. It has been noted by some theologians that since each seraphim had three sets of wings and they say "holy" three times, these may be Old Testament hints of the Trinity, a doctrine more fully developed in the New Testament. But two extremes must be avoided here. It is not proper to say, for example, that repeating "holy" three times proves the Trinity. In other words, we should not assume that the Trinity is referred to whenever we see three of anything in Scripture. It would also be improper to say that those things have no impact whatsoever on a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. What we can do is see the threefold use of "holy" as one of the various pointers scattered throughout the Old Testament relating to the Trinity, but not as conclusive proof of it. The praise of the seraphim continued with the statement that **"the whole earth is full of his glory."** In other words, the fullness of all creation is God's **"glory."** His **"glory"** includes creation and the way everything He has made fits together. However, it goes even further than that. God's holiness is something that for the most part remains hidden, while His **"glory"** is something that is designed to be made known.

2. (vs. 4). In response to the praise of the seraphims this verse says **"And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."** No doubt the force of the praise spoken by the seraphim caused the temple to shake. We must



realize that God let this happen in such a way so that the structure was not harmed. In addition to the temple shaking, **"the house was filled with smoke."** Some believe that the **"smoke"** was a manifestation of God's presence as on other occasions in Israel's history (see Exodus 19:18). This may be true, but the **"smoke"** could have come from the burning incense on the altar (see vs. 6; Leviticus 16:13). Another possibility is that the **"smoke"** was indicative of God's wrath against Judah (see Psalms 18:6-8). The verses immediately after our lesson text give an indication of God's anger with Judah.

IV. ISAIAH'S CLEANSING FROM SIN (Isaiah 6:5-7)

A. Isaiah's confession of sin (Isaiah 6:5). When Isaiah saw the LORD, he immediately looked at himself and 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 mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."** The word **"woe"** describes deep sorrow, grief or affliction. Realizing that he was not fit to be in God's presence after witnessing His holiness, Isaiah was in deep sorrow and said **"for I am undone."** The Hebrew word for **"undone"** means *"to perish."* Isaiah thought he was going to die after seeing God's glory. He gave two reasons why he thought his death was imminent. First, Isaiah said **"because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."** The overwhelming power and purity of God forced Isaiah to see himself as he really was—a



sinful, imperfect man. Just as we see the dirt on a garment when we put it closer to the light, we can also see the dirt of our lives the closer we get to God and His holiness. At that moment, the sin that most condemned the prophet was having **"unclean (defiled) lips."** He had already seen the seraphim proclaiming God's holiness (see Isaiah 6:3), but as a sinner he could not adequately praise God. Our **"lips"** express what's in our hearts, and a sinful heart cannot render worthy praise (see Matthew 15:17-20). Isaiah also acknowledged the sinfulness of his people when he said, **"and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.** In other words, his **"lips"** were **"unclean"** and so were the **"lips"** of all the **"people"** among whom he lived. **Note:** *Remember the statement in James 3:6, "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." We all can think of sinful things we have said. Isaiah was not an ungodly man, but the more he understood about God's holiness, the more he understood about his own sinfulness. The prophet most likely mentioned his "lips" in particular because he had just heard praise from the "lips" of morally perfect beings, the seraphim.* The second reason Isaiah thought he would die was **"for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."** Isaiah had no doubt about what he saw and he equated this with imminent death because he knew that no person can look upon God and live (see Exodus 33:20). However, as noted earlier, he didn't actually see God the Father but God the Son before He became flesh. Otherwise, he would have died as he feared. Here, he identified God as **"the King, the LORD of hosts."** The word **"hosts"** means armies. **Note:** *Isaiah's realization of his own sinfulness came through*



comparison of his own holiness with the absolute holiness of God shown visibly by the pre-incarnate Christ. Sometimes we get a distorted picture of ourselves because we compare ourselves with vile sinners and get the idea that when compared to them we are not that bad and are quite good. However, comparing ourselves to sinners is not a very good standard of measurement. God must remain our standard of comparison.

B. The method of Isaiah's cleansing (Isaiah 6:6-7).

1. (vs. 6). After Isaiah's confession he said **"Then 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."** Isaiah saw one of the **"seraphims"** (indicating that there was more than one) **"having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar."** Using a pair of **"tongs,"** he took off the altar **"one of the seraphim"** removed a hot **"live (or hot) coal... from the altar"** and held it **"in his hand"** as he flew towards Isaiah. At this point, Isaiah saw the **"seraphim"** as having bodies similar to those of humans, but with wings. One may wonder if the **"seraphim"** was burned when he took the hot **"coal in his hand."** Most likely he was not. In our present state we cannot understand what happened anymore than we can understand how Christ's resurrection body could pass through solid objects (see Luke 24:33-36; John 20:19, 26). The important point was what the **"seraphim"** did with the hot **"coal"** and what it symbolized as we shall see in the next



verse.

2. (vs. 7). Isaiah continued to say in this verse **"And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."** As the seraphim **"touched"** Isaiah's **"lips"** with the hot coal, he said **"thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."** This was not an account of Isaiah's conversion because he believed in God before this incident. What we see here is Isaiah's cleansing and purification for greater service to God. Isaiah was an unclean vessel. At that moment, the prophet knew his **"lips"** had been purified, his **"iniquity taken away"** and his **"sin purged."** The verb translated **"purged"** means *"to atone for," "to cover,"* or *"to forgive."* As mentioned earlier, the word seraphim means *"burning ones."* The act of one of them taking a burning coal off the altar and touching Isaiah with it was a meaningful, yet *symbolic* gesture meant to show the complete removal of Isaiah's unworthiness by burning it all away. **Note: *The hot coal taken from the altar of incense symbolizes God's purifying work and involves repentance which can be painful. Experience tells us that there is truth in this statement. When any person, especially a believer comes face to face with the ugliness of his or her own sinfulness, there is emotional pain in facing the truth. Genuine repentance is often accomplished by the flowing of tears as we face the stark realization of our failure before God. We need to spend much time studying God in order to help us develop a realistic view of ourselves.***



V. ISAIAH'S CALL (Isaiah 6:8). In our final verse, Isaiah writes **"Also 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."** Once Isaiah had been cleansed (see verse 7), he **"heard the voice of the LORD"** Himself asking **"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"** The wording indicates that God was speaking to others in His heavenly council. The use of the word **"us"** is a reference to the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father was speaking to the other two Persons of the Godhead asking who could be sent on their behalf to carry out their work. Upon hearing this, Isaiah realized that he was now ready and willing to do whatever the LORD wanted him to do. The prophet's immediate response was **"Here am I; send me."** Like Isaiah, we need to see ourselves in the light of God's holiness and then seek His cleansing. Only then can we be ready to say, **"Here am I; send me."** **Note: *Isaiah responded before he knew what the commission or job was. We can't help but notice the abrupt change in Isaiah's behavior. Moments earlier, the prophet had feared for his life; now he was willing to answer the LORD's call to an unknown task. Being cleansed and seeing God's power and glory gave him confidence in the LORD's care and in His ability to use Isaiah in His service. The prophet's blind (not knowing what God wanted him to do) response indicated complete readiness and trust in the One he would serve. This is the type of response God desires from every one of His children. The commission for Isaiah is recorded in***



Isaiah 6:9-10. He would be a prophet sent to a rebellious hard-hearted people. The work would not be easy. Most would not listen to him or follow him even though he spoke for God and with His authority. We too, may face the same rejection from people as we witness to the truth for our LORD Jesus Christ.

VI. Conclusion. When Isaiah saw the LORD, he became more aware of God's holiness. Today, we need to view God through the Bible to see Him in all His holiness. However, this view of God could be overshadowed by our shortcomings, problems, and sin. We must recognize our sinfulness like Isaiah, and confess our sin. When we do, God forgives us, and our iniquity is taken away (see I John 1:8-9). It is only then that God can use us. Are you ready to say, "*Here am I; send me?*"

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