

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ISA. 6:1 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.

2 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.

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

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

5 Then 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.

6 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:

7 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.

8 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.

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

10 Make 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.

11 Then 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,

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

13 But 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.

NOTES

Isaiah's Glimpse of God's Throne

Lesson Text: Isaiah 6:1-13

Related Scriptures: Exodus 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10;
Matthew 13:10-16; John 12:36b-43; Acts 28:23-28

TIME: about 740 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT—“Then 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” (Isaiah 6:5).

Lesson Exposition

THE DISPLAY OF GOD'S SUPREMACY—Isa. 6:1-4

Isaiah sets the historical scene with some crushing words in verse 1: “in the year that King Uzziah died.” His death meant the loss of hope, stability, and national security. The death of Uzziah, however, is only the setup for what Isaiah saw about God Himself in contrast to the deceased king.

The eternity and sovereignty of the Lord (Isa. 6:1a). We see God's eternity clearly displayed in verse 1 when Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne. The contrast could not be clearer: the king is dead, but the Lord lives on. Uzziah's reign ended, but the Lord still reigns upon His throne—unfazed and unaffected by the affairs of men. He sits on His throne unchanging, never beginning, and always existing.

The sovereignty of God is displayed in two ways in Isaiah's vision. First, Isaiah called God “the Lord.” The word in Hebrew is *Adonai* and speaks to His authority, dominion, and power by which He rules all things. Second, God's sovereignty is pictured by His

sitting on a throne. A throne points to the absolute, undisputed dominion by which God oversees everything that comes to pass. There is nothing that transpires in the universe except what He Himself allows, because He is sovereign.

The supremacy of the Lord (Isa. 6:1b). As far as Isaiah could see, the royal robes of God filled every inch of the massive temple. The ground was completely covered with His kingly robes. The Lord is the most important person in the room. It is His supremacy that keeps Isaiah from coming any closer!

The splendor of the Lord (Isa. 6:2). The Lord has an entourage around His throne, which Isaiah calls seraphim. The word “seraphim” means “the burning ones,” which tells us that they are fiery, dazzling, and even blinding in appearance. The primary role and function of the seraphim, however, was worship—to worship the Lord and to revere Him. Each possessed six wings, and with two of those wings, the seraphim covered their face. They

were unable to look directly at the unfiltered majesty of God. His glory is too overwhelming even for the eyes of angels. With two more wings the seraphim covered their feet. The Lord is so majestic and supreme that they did not feel worthy to leave their feet exposed in His presence. Finally, with two wings the seraphim flew, and they hovered in striking position ready to do the bidding of the King.

The holiness of the Lord (Isa. 6:3a). While Isaiah said very little about the seraphim, it is clear they have wings and mouths—wings to serve and do the bidding of the King, and mouths to proclaim His infinite worth. And what they proclaimed around the throne is one of the most jaw-dropping declarations ever made about God in the pages of Scripture. Back-and-forth the seraphim proclaimed, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.”

The holiness of God stands out prominently in the threefold proclamation of the seraphim. We must understand that God’s holiness is not only His sinlessness or moral purity but also His separateness and supremacy over everything that is not God. The word “holy” points to the quality of being set apart and transcendent. God’s holiness, therefore, is His transcendence, His otherness, His distinctness, and His matchless supremacy over all things. The Lord is not holy because He keeps the rules; He is holy because His very character defines the rules.

The glory of the Lord (Isa. 6:3b-4). There are more lyrics to the song of the seraphim, who declare that all of the earth is full of God’s glory. What is the glory of God? The word “glory” in Hebrew refers to a weight or what is heavy. Applied to a person, “glory” speaks of one whose qualities make them weighty—that is, a person of distinction and importance. Applied to God, it refers to the infinite weight

and worth of God’s beauty and value because of His innumerable perfections that make Him who He is (see lesson 1 for further discussion on God’s glory).

Suddenly, Isaiah was awakened out of his captivated terror by a violent shaking (vs. 4). The walls and beams were moving, and the temple filled with smoke. The ominous signs indicate that Isaiah was invited to see in this vision nothing less than a scene of judgment and doom for the nation of Israel.

The power Isaiah needed to sustain him for the mission to which he was about to be called was a majestic vision of God, matchless and supreme. That is what would supply the courage and perseverance he needed to preach to a people that was spiritually blind and unresponsive (cf. vss. 9-10).

THE DESPAIR OVER MAN’S DEPRAVITY—Isa. 6:5-7

Isaiah was unclean before the Holy One, and that experience changed his life forever. In verses 5-7, Isaiah’s response to the majesty of God comes in three parts.

The ruin (Isa. 6:5a). In response to God’s holiness, Isaiah declared that he was ruined. His piercing utterance proclaimed his self-condemnation. The response of “woe” was a cry of despair as Isaiah knew that his condemnation was well deserved. The one who had been pronouncing woes upon other people for their sin (cf. chap. 5) now had to pronounce a woe upon himself.

The reason (Isa. 6:5b). Isaiah’s despair resulted from his defiled state. He referred to himself as a man with unclean lips, who lived among a people with unclean lips. This was a rhetorical way to refer to the people’s unclean hearts. Just seeing the blazing splendor of the holiness of God exposed in an instant Isaiah’s own unworthiness.

Isaiah's crippling despair and fear over his own sin, however, were about to be relieved.

The restoration (Isa. 6:6-7). Just when Isaiah's despair was at its apex, the mercy of God intervened in a dramatic way. The desperate cry of Isaiah was pleasing to the Lord, and in response He sent one of the seraphim to burn Isaiah's lips with a hot coal from the altar. That was a vivid illustration for Isaiah that all his sins and iniquities had been purified by the cleansing mercy of the Holy One!

THE DESCRIPTION OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY—Isa. 6:8-12

With his deepest fears over his sin relieved, Isaiah stood in the smoke-filled palace as a recipient of God's atoning mercy. For the first time, the One who sits on the throne spoke, asking the question, "Whom shall I send?" (vs. 8). Uncertain of the exact details (or potential danger) of this mission, Isaiah responded immediately to the call, "Here am I; send me."

As heroic and commendable as Isaiah's eagerness was, the people to whom he was being sent to preach, as a whole, would reject, ignore, and defy his message. In verses 9-10, God explained that Isaiah's audience would be dull in heart, deaf in the ears, and blind in the eyes—being virtually unresponsive to his preaching. Isaiah did not miss the significance of that. He asked in verse 11, "How long?" How long would Israel defy and reject the call to repent and trust in God alone? The answer in verses 11-12 is frightening and sad—Israel would reject and defy the Lord until invaders arrived, torched the cities, and enslaved the people. And in 586 B.C. (over 150 years after Isaiah's vision), the armies of Babylon invaded Judah, stormed the gates and leveled the city of Jerusalem to the ground.

THE DEPICTION OF ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE—Isa. 6:13

The chapter does not end entirely in despair, however. Verse 13 revealed that in the distant future a remnant of Jews would, in fact, return. Despite the invasion, war, enslavement, and captivity that was coming in the future, a remnant would be spared and would one day embrace their Messiah and receive the promised kingdom.

The main theological lesson of Isaiah 6 is the matchless supremacy of God over all things. He is supreme over all kings and rulers. He is supreme over all angelic beings. He is supreme over all creation and human history. And He is even supreme over human sin and depravity. Only He can provide forgiveness.

—Jerod A. Gilcher

QUESTIONS

1. What did King Uzziah's death mean to the nation?
2. What was the contrast Isaiah implied between Uzziah and the Lord?
3. What two ways did Isaiah's vision display God's sovereignty?
4. What does a throne symbolize?
5. What was the primary role of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision?
6. What monumental declaration do the seraphim make?
7. What does "glory" mean when it is applied to God?
8. When confronted with God's holiness, what was Isaiah's declaration concerning himself?
9. What led to Isaiah's feeling of despair?
10. How would the people respond to Isaiah's preaching?

—Glenn Weaver

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God's plan and message are more significant than the most important political events (Isa. 6:1).
2. Angels are prepared to serve at God's command; so should we (vs. 2).
3. God's servants have a grasp of God's holiness (vs. 3).
4. The same voice of God that created the earth can shake its foundations (vs. 4).
5. Those who would be used by God must first see their sinfulness (vs. 5).
6. Only God can cleanse a person from the sin that hinders salvation and service (vss. 6-7).
7. God uses human beings to deliver His message of salvation to sinners (vs. 8).
8. God wants us to be faithful even when our message is refused (vss. 9-13).

—Glenn Weaver

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Is it necessary to actually see God, as Isaiah did, in order to feel compelled to serve the Lord (Isa. 6:1)?
2. In what ways can we see God's holiness and glory in the world today (vs. 3)?
3. What experiences in life force us to see the magnitude of our sinfulness (vs. 5)?
4. Why did God send Isaiah instead of an angel to proclaim His message (cf. vs. 8)?
5. Can you think of some modern-day examples of missionaries who encountered difficult audiences and continued to preach God's Word?

—Glenn Weaver

Golden Text Illuminated

"Then 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" (Isaiah 6:5).

Have you ever wanted to know what the throne of God looks like? Is it bright with majesty or radiating with a holy shimmer? Isaiah's encounter with God's majestic throne in Isaiah 6 provides us with valuable lessons on humility, repentance, and awe in the presence of our heavenly King.

Isaiah's immediate reaction upon seeing God's throne was a profound awareness of his own unworthiness and sinfulness. The sight of God's infinite glory humbled him, stripping away any pride or self-confidence. Recognizing our own insignificance in comparison to God's majesty should lead us to surrender our lives wholly to Him, acknowledging our complete dependence on His mercy and grace.

Seeing God's throne should ignite a transformation within us, pushing us to respond with action and renewed dedication to His purposes. We must remember that God is full of holiness and grace. His holiness calls us, and His grace changes us. Just as Isaiah felt a call of surrender and change in his own life, we can as well.

Just as Isaiah cried out in repentance, we too must examine our hearts, identify any areas of sin, and turn to God for forgiveness and cleansing. A true encounter with God's holiness demands genuine repentance that leads to transformation and a witness for Him.

—Page Brooks