

Isaiah Chapter 6

Verses 1-5

In preparation for calling Isaiah to be the prophet who would proclaim the coming judgment, God gave him a vision of His majestic holiness so overwhelming that it devastated him and made him realize his own sinfulness.

In chapter 6 Isaiah recounts his original call to the prophetic ministry, dating it from the year that king Uzziah died (740 B.C.).

With the death of godly Uzziah, Judah's golden age was fast slipping away.

No human leader appeared on the scene to reverse the decadence that had begun during Uzziah's final years of isolation due to leprosy.

At this crucial hour, the prophet's attention was turned to God Himself, the true Sovereign in the affairs of men.

A throne refers to the throne of heaven (see Rev. 4:2).

His train refers to His royal robes.

Seraphim ("burning ones") are six winged angelic creatures that continually fly in the presence of God, declaring His holiness.

Holy, holy, holy is a threefold declaration of God's person and may be taken as a suggestion of the Trinity.

Note that when God speaks, He uses the plural pronoun "us" (verse 8).

Isaiah 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."

King Uzziah's death:

After 52 years of reigning, leprosy caused the death of king Uzziah, and Isaiah began his prophetic ministry that year.

He received the prophecies of the first 5 chapters after his call, but at (6:1), he returns to authenticate what he has already written by describing how he was called.

"I saw":

The prophet became unconscious of the outside world and with his inner eye saw what God revealed to him.

This experience recalls the experience of John's prophetic vision (in Rev. 4:1-11).

"High and lifted up":

The throne was greatly elevated, emphasizing the Most High God.

"Train" refers to the hem or fringe of the Lord's glorious robe that filled the temple.

"Temple":

Though Isaiah may have been at the earthly temple, this describes a vision which transcends the earthly.

The throne of God is in the heavenly temple (Rev. 4:1-6; 5:1-7; 11:19; 15:5-8).

Many Bible students believe this happened at the very beginning of the book of Isaiah.

I tend to believe the book is in the order it should be.

Many of those called to work for God have a deeper experience with the Lord, after they have begun to serve Him.

This is not unusual, as far as I am concerned.

This vision Isaiah had was a specific time.

It is very similar to the first vision that Ezekiel had.

"Lord" is speaking of Adonai.

The name Adonai is just a way to express the name of the Lord more reverently, referring to the Hebrew Yahweh.

We know from other Scriptures, that there is a throne in heaven, and that Jesus (as we know Him), sits at the right hand of the Father.

The Holy of Holies in the tabernacle was a type of this throne.

This majestic throne is above all.

The curtain was pulled aside, and Isaiah was allowed to see the throne of God.

This train is like the train brides have on their wedding dresses, but this is more elaborate and fills the temple.

Isaiah 6:2 "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."

The seraphim are an order of angelic creatures who bear a similarity to the 4 living creatures (of Rev. 4:6), which in turn resemble the cherubim (of Ezekiel 10:1).

“Six wings”:

Two wings covered the faces of the seraphim because they dared not gaze directly at God’s glory.

Two covered their feet, acknowledging their lowliness even though engaged in divine service.

With two they flew in serving the One on the throne.

Thus, 4 wings related to worship, emphasizing the priority of praise.

A seraphim in the near presence of God was like a flaming fire.

It is interesting to me, that there are 6 wings.

The number 6 symbolizes mankind.

The seraphim are in the near presence of God, waiting on the instructions of God.

It is interesting to me, that they can fly.

When God appears to man, or one of His creatures, male or female, there must be some kind of shielding to keep him from the direct view of the Lord's face.

Usually there is a smoke around Him to keep Him somewhat hidden.

Isaiah 6:3 "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory."

“Cried unto another”:

The seraphs were speaking to each other in antiphonal praise: “Holy, Holy, Holy”.

The primary thrust of the 3-fold repetition of God’s holiness (called the trihagion), is to emphasize God’s separateness from and independence of His fallen creation, though it implies secondarily that God is 3 persons.

See Rev. 4:8, where the 4 living creatures utter the trihagion.

“Full of His glory”:

The earth is the worldwide display of His immeasurable glory, perfections and attributes as seen in creation (see Rom. 1:20).

Fallen man has nevertheless refused to glorify Him as God (Rom. 1:23).

This crying out Holy seems to be part of their task.

The fact of the Holiness of God is the very thing that separates Him from mankind.

We are told to be holy, because He is Holy. Personally, I believe the word holy being said 3 times indicates Father, Word, and Holy Ghost.

We know from the Scripture (in 1 John 5:7), there are three that bear record in heaven, and those 3 are One.

1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

“LORD” is generally used when it is speaking of the fullness of the Godhead.

The whole world is full of His glory.

We can take a look around us and see the glory of God.

The whole earth speaks out in glory to God.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the flowers, and the mountains in their majesty.

The greatest thing to glorify God is His creation of mankind.

The human body is one of the most outstanding mysteries.

When I see someone who does not desire to glorify God, because they are so caught up in self, I ask them: Have you created any worlds lately?

That pretty well explains the glory of God.

He is so far above anything and everything else in the world; it leaves no room for anything except to glory in Him.

Then, it is not just the seraphims that should cry “Holy, holy, holy”, but all mankind, as well.

Isaiah 6:4 "And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

The trembling and smoke symbolize God's holiness as it relates to His wrath and judgment (Exodus 19:16-20; Rev. 15:8).

The volume of the seraphims crying out to God made such a powerful sound that it shook the foundations the posts were set upon.

Smoke is many times the sign that God is there.

He had shown Himself present in the camp with the Israelites with a smoke by day and a fire by night.

Isaiah 6:5 "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."

Isaiah's confession" Having seen God in the full glory of His holiness, Isaiah pronounces the prophetic "Woe" upon himself.

This was a legal charge meaning "ruined" or "dead."

His self-evaluation was, "I am undone", from Hebrew "damah", meaning "to be dumb" or "silent".

Thus, his response was a statement of total self condemnation: "I am dead ... I am speechless!"

Recognizing that he has no legitimate excuse for himself, he further realizes that he is unclean (tame, "defiled" or "polluted").

This self-evaluation is made in light of the fact that he has seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

The heavenly King is identified as Yahweh Himself, who is called "LORD of hosts" 62 times in Isaiah and 261 times throughout the Old Testament.

This scripture just means that he had been in the presence of God.

It does not mean that he looked into the face of God.

You cannot look upon the face of God and live.

This is speaking of being in the presence of God.

To be a mortal man and come into the presence of God would be a terribly humbling experience.

There is no comparison between Almighty God and man.

To be in His presence, would show the person the sinful nature he had.

It would turn God's great Light on the man to such an extent that the man would be totally aware of all his faults.

Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Perhaps, Isaiah thought he would die, because he was in the presence of God.

“Unclean lips” just means that every word that proceeded from his mouth was not perfect.

Out of the heart the mouth speaketh.

If the lips are unclean then, so too is the heart.

This vision of God’s holiness vividly reminded the prophet of his own unworthiness which deserved judgment.

Job (Job 42:6) and Peter (Luke 5:8), came to the same realization about themselves when confronted with the presence of the Lord.

He knew anything he said had revealed that he was not a perfect man, and no one living was perfect either.

He was overwhelmed by being in the presence of Holy God who is perfect.

Verses 6-7

Isaiah’s Consecration: Isaiah’s confession of his personal sin brought the response of God’s cleansing to equip him for service to the Lord.

The altar was the place of blood sacrifice, called by later rabbinic writers the Paraclete, or place of expiation or intercession.

The coal has no redemptive ability of its own but is symbolic of the efficacy of the burnt offering consumed on the altar.

Thus, Isaiah’s sin was purged (cleansed).

Isaiah 6:6 "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:"

The hot coal taken from the altar of incense in heaven (Rev. 8:3-5), is emblematic of God's purifying work.

Repentance is painful.

We know the throne of God in heaven is the original that the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle was patterned from.

We know that all things in the close proximity of God must be pure gold.

This altar was possibly, the altar of incense.

This fire never went out.

The live coal would have been some kind of stone that was lying on the altar.

Notice this scripture says that the seraphim had the coal in his hand.

This tells us seraphims have hands.

Another thing we must notice is the seraphim took the golden tong to remove the coal from the golden altar.

He was not allowed to touch the altar itself.

Isaiah 6:7 "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."

Our God is a consuming fire.

This cleansing of Isaiah's mouth symbolically cleansed the source of iniquity.

The heart is the source, but the iniquity comes out the mouth.

We have spoken earlier in these lessons of how the fire burns away the sin and leaves the person pure.

The baptism Jesus gave us was the baptism of fire of the Holy Ghost.

"Purged", in this Scripture, means canceled.

Isaiah 6:8 "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."

"Isaiah's call":

Isaiah states that he heard the voice of the Lord asking whom He should send and who will go for us?

The plural pronouns are used here (as in Genesis 1:26), to refer to the triune God.

The prophet himself is now a changed man.

Having his burden of guilt and worry removed, he spontaneously volunteers: Here am I; send me.

His consecration by God prepared him to answer God's call to service.

This is the most beautiful call to minister and the answer to that call.

Not only was Isaiah aware of the presence of the Lord in the smoke and in the fire, but now he hears the voice of God.

The answer Isaiah gave showed his willingness, and even eagerness, to serve God.

Verses 9-13

Isaiah's commission: God warns Isaiah that his ministry, for the most part, will fall upon deaf ears.

The syntax of the sentence indicates that "hear ye indeed" means "keep on hearing."

"Fat, ears heavy" "shut their eyes":

This indicates that the more he preaches, the more the people will harden themselves to his message until the Babylonian captivity, after which only a tenth shall return.

Isaiah 6:9 "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not."

Isaiah's message (in verses 9 and 10), was to be God's instrument for hiding the truth from an unreceptive people.

Centuries later, Jesus' parables were to do the same.

There is no understanding or true sight, until the Holy Spirit of God reveals what the words of the prophet are saying.

Isaiah will bring the message as God has given him, but these people are not willing to understand and believe.

Isaiah 6:10 "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."

Jesus spoke in parables, so the people would not accept Him with their mind and be saved.

God wants the heart of mankind, not his mind.

These people were so hardened to the teachings of God, that they would not receive the message Isaiah gives them from God.

They will be without excuse, because they were told and did not listen.

Isaiah 6:11 "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,"

Because of such rejection from his people, the prophet asked how long he should preach this message of divine judgment.

God replied that it must continue until the cities are desolate (verse 11, and the people have gone into exile (verse 12).

God will have a remnant, but many will perish in their unbelief.

Isaiah is to continue to preach, until the country is taken by the enemy.

This is a punishment from God.

Isaiah 6:12 "And the LORD have removed men far away, and [there be] a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

Thousands will be taken captive and taken to a foreign land.

The land of Judah will be desolate.

Isaiah 6:13 "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."

“A tenth”:

Though most will reject God, the tenth, also called “stump” and “holy seed”, represents the faithful remnant in Israel who will be the nucleus who hear and believe.

A teil tree is a lime tree.

God always has a remnant.

The Jews would be taken by the Egyptians, Persians, and Syrians.

Any, or all of these, could be intended.

These trees are mentioned, because they are known to shoot up again from a root, and make another tree.

This remnant will always be for God.

He leaves Himself a portion of His people to spring forth again.

Isaiah Chapter 6 Questions

1. What happened to Isaiah the year King Uzziah died?
2. What year did Uzziah die?
3. What word was Lord translated from in verse 1?
4. What does it mean?
5. What is the train in verse 1?
6. What stood above the throne?
7. How many wings did they have?
8. What did they do with their wings?
9. What is a "seraphim"?
10. What is the seraphim's purpose?
11. What does the number 6 symbolize?
12. What were the seraphims crying out?
13. What does the author believe the three "holys" indicate?
14. LORD is generally used when it is speaking of the fullness of the _____.
15. What do we see His glory in, here on the earth?
16. What happened when the seraphims cried out?

17. What was the house filled with?
18. Why did Isaiah say "Woe is me"?
19. What exactly does verse 5 mean about seeing God?
20. Where did the seraphim get the coal?
21. What did the seraphim do with the coal of fire?
22. How do we know the seraphim has hands?
23. How do we know the seraphim did not touch the altar?
24. What was the altar made of?
25. What happened to Isaiah when the coal touched his mouth?
26. Our God is a consuming _____.
27. What does "purged" in verse 7 mean?
28. What did the voice of the Lord say to Isaiah?
29. How did Isaiah answer?
30. What did the answer Isaiah give show about himself?
31. Would the people receive Isaiah's message from God?
32. Why will these people be without excuse?
33. How long was Isaiah to bring the message?
34. What will happen to the land of Judah?
35. Why were these particular trees chosen as an example (in verse 12)?