

Isaiah 6 — “A Sight of God’s Holiness” 以赛亚书 6 — “看见神的圣洁荣光”

READ THE TEXT

Isaiah 6 (NASB1995)

6 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. 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. ³ And one called out to another and said,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,
The ^[a]whole earth is full of His glory.”

⁴ And the ^[b]foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the ^[c]temple was filling with smoke. 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.”

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. ⁷ He touched my mouth *with it* and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is ^[d]forgiven.”

Isaiah’s Commission

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!” ⁹ He said, “Go, and tell this people:

‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive;

Keep on looking, but do not understand.’

¹⁰ “Render the hearts of this people ^[e]insensitive,

Their ears ^[f]dull,

And their eyes ^[g]dim,

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,

Hear with their ears,

Understand with their hearts,

And return and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “Lord, how long?” And He answered,

“Until cities are devastated *and* without inhabitant,

Houses are without people

And the land is utterly desolate,

¹² “The Lord has removed men far away,

And the ^[h]forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

¹³ “Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,

And it will again be *subject* to burning,

Like a terebinth or an oak

Whose stump remains when it is felled.

The holy seed is its stump.”

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

- AW TOZER’s classic book on the attributes of God (*Knowledge of the Holy*, p.1), “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us!”
 - ‘The biggest problem that the human race has is this ... GOD IS HOLY.’ (Sproul)
 - The
- There is only ONE attribute of God communicated in the superlative degree from the mouth of angels... GOD IS HOLY.
 - like the best of the best: the most of the most: the supremest of the supreme. GOD IS THE HOLIEST OF ALL — pure, other, set apart, clean, unpolluted! (v.3)

♣the theme of Leviticus is the **Holiness of God!**

♣[1] The **way** to God/access to God is thru a holy sacrifice (1-17)

♣[2] The **walk** with God is thru holy living (18-27). **God is Holy!**

♣**The Bible teaches this:** God is Majestic in holiness (Ex 15.11) **///** Holiness adorns God’s House forever (Ps 93.5) **///** He is the Holy & Jealous God (Josh 24.19) **///** There is NONE holy like the LORD (1 Sam 2.2) **///** God is to be worshipped in holy majesty/array (1 Chron 16.29) **///** God sits on his Holy Throne (Ps 47.8) **///** We must exalt & worship because God is Holy (Psalm 99.5, 9) **///** God’s holiness is awesome/fearsome (Ps 111.9) **///** God’s Name is Holy (Isa 57:15) **///** The song of heaven is “Holy Holy Holy is the LORD (Rev 4.8).

- His holiness adorns, graces, and attends all that God is. His love is HOLY. His mercy is HOLY. His wrath is HOLY. His patience is HOLY. His omniscience is HOLY.

THESIS — This chapter is the call & commission of Isaiah to prophetic ministry. To be prepared & useful, he must see God’s holiness, see his sinfulness, be cleansed & serve God amidst a really tough ministry. ***I wanna give you a practical outline in 4 words.***

1. **SIGHT** - he saw the Lord (1-4)
2. **INSIGHT** - he saw himself (5-7)
3. **MISSION** - he saw the need (8-12)
4. **FAITH** - he saw the hope (13)

I. **SIGHT!** - Isaiah saw the Lord (1-4)

- theme: ***Isaiah saw the Lord in his majesty (call it: LOOK UP!)***

A. v.1 - in the year of Uzziah’s death (740BC)

1. Uzziah—a great king (2 Chron26)— efficient administrator; strong military leader; brilliant engineer; successful protector; expanded borders.> Judah grew in every way; a true king **BUT** >> but the king died: moment of crisis. In the year of Uzziah’s death = what we trusted in was GONE.
2. **Let me apply this** —The King must die >> what the people trusted in. > What is that *king* that must die in your life (What do you confide, hope, trust, rely, find comfort in—relationship, finances, political party/leader, freedoms, comfort)?

- a) the king had died, the nation was in peril, the Assyrian enemies are rising in power, and he could do little about it.
- B. v.1b- Lord = sitting on a throne
1. “**Lofty and Exalted**” - cf. 57:15; 52:13 - referring to God; one to Messiah.
 2. Train of his robe (=hem) filling the Temple — can’t be measured! wow! Like the wedding dress of a Bride. Wow! captivated, dazzled, words can’t express!
- C. The Sight of the Angels (2-3)
1. “Seraphim” —burning ones; flames of fire. 6 wings to shield themselves from the *purity of God*. (not only cover faces but *feet*—as a symbol of the body/what they do > wanna be covered, fade into background >> be swallowed up in God!
 2. v.3 - the Seraphim speak one to another (antiphonal response) -God-centered!
 3. **Holy Holy Holy!** - emphasis, *superlative*, loud. Holy, Holier, Holiest!! It is Repetition // It is Declaration // It is God-Enthralled // It is Antiphonal // It is Superlative, exclusive. >It’s the Song of Heaven (Rev 4-5). **Holy!**
- D. **Holiness: think of holiness in 3 dimensions:**
1. **Majestic** holiness (separateness) - different, set apart, other
 2. **Moral** holiness (pureness) - pure, undefiled, clean, unpolluted
 3. **Joyful** holiness (gladness) - perfectly happy in his purity
 - a) The holiness of God is the sparkle that adorns every attribute of God and all that God is
 - b) Holiness is God’s beauty.
 - c) Robert Murray M’Cheyne >> “I am persuaded that God’s happiness is inseparably linked in with His holiness. Holiness and happiness are like light and heat” - Our God is majestically, morally, joyfully Holy! **Holy Holy Holy!**
- E. v.3b-the whole earth...glory-God is not only far off, but his glory/radiance *fills the earth*.
- F. v.4b- so loud was their singing it shook the Temple & the **Temple was filling with Smoke** (of God’s presence/glory; cf. Rev 15.8; cf. **Ex 19.18** - Mt Sinai was all in smoke = **God Is Here!**). **This is a SIGHT of God. Have you *seen* God?**

II. **INSIGHT!** - Isaiah saw himself (5-7)

- theme: *Isaiah saw himself with proper humility (call it: LOOK IN)*
- A. a proper *sight* of God produces a proper *insight* of self.
1. Yes God is BIG & LOFTY. But the real issue is *not* one of immensity (God is bigger) but one of purity (God’s character is pure/clean/uncontaminated).
- B. A right sight of God uncovers one’s sin before God.
- ❖ See JOB’s response (Job 42.5-6)
 - ❖ See John’s response (Revelation 1.17)
 - ❖ See Peter’s response (Luke 5.8)
1. Isaiah: “WOE is me” (ch.5 woes; now upon *himself*) I am ruined (ESV: ‘lost’; KJV: ‘undone’; NLT: “i’m doomed”).
→ It’s NOT Isaiah’s *smallness* that crushes him; it’s his *uncleanness* that crushes him. > has this ever happened to you?

- C. v.5b- unclean “lips”? Why lips (and not heart, mind) >> **b/c he just heard the Seraphim singing with their lips to God.** Isaiah is so far *undone*. *A wretch! How foul, polluted!*
- D. v.6- A Seraphim takes a burning coal [lit in Heb: “Living coal” — same used as Lev 16 *Day of Atonement*] and the burning angel had to take a coal with tongs—*must be HOT*.
 Which Altar [of incense: prayer] *OR* Brazen Altar (fire always burning (Lev 6.12)).
1. **I wonder:** Perhaps the Coal may have been a piece of Charred, Smoking Lamb’s Flesh from off of the Altar of Sacrifice (Brazen Altar) — by which sins are forgiven, atonement is made, sin is dealt with by the Lamb’s substitutionary death!
 2. The **death of that Lamb** meant Life for us! The substitute died for me!
- E. v.7- Touched my mouth & declared: **iniquity taken away.** And **Sin is forgiven.**
- Iniquity [עֲוֹנוֹתָי]-inner twistedness, corruption is taken away/removed [נִסְתָּר].
AND: your Sin [חַטֹּאתַי] is forgiven [lit *passive*: has been atoned, תִּכַּפֵּר].
1. See God's sovereign initiative. Isaiah didn’t ask for it; God graciously gave it. He did nothing to merit it. No sacrifice. No work. Nothing. *All of Grace!* SDG!
 2. Have you been cleansed? Has this coal touched your lips? This insight?

Now, when the prophet has *sight of God’s holiness & cleansing from his sinfulness*, Now God speaks for the first time.

- Seeing GOD reveals your sin
- Confessing SIN brings full forgiveness
- Being Forgiven inspires surrender & obedience to whatever God says

III. **MISSION!** - Isaiah saw the need (8-12)

- theme: *Isaiah saw the need to go & proclaim! (call it: LOOK AHEAD)*

A. v.8 - The Commission

1. The Lord asks: who will go (same Lord of v.1). Who will go for **US**: indicates plurality in this *One God-head!*
2. Send Me! Isaiah did not know the nature, length, place, message, difficulty, opposition of the mission >> but he made NO excuses (unlike Moses or Jeremiah) >> he gladly volunteered.
3. The higher you see God, the more willingly you’ll serve God *without excuse*.

B. v.9-10 - The Mission

1. Isa 1-5 - Israel/Judah is a rough crowd; arrogant, self-lovers, drunks, God-despisers, blasphemers, violent, unjust. Isaiah has a hardening message for a calloused audience. >> Isaiah preaches Truth to further harden people who believe a lie.
2. faithful preaching softens some & hardens others. **THE SAME SUN THAT MELTS THE WAX ALSO HARDENS THE CLAY.** And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins.”
3. The same gospel is: an aroma of life to life to some & an aroma of death to death to others.
 - a) Those who persistently harden their hearts to God may find themselves finally hardened BY GOD.
 - b) Like Pharaoh - He hardened his own heart (Ex 7.13-14, 22) but also GOD hardened his heart (Ex 7.3). God’s hardening is not manipulative or arbitrary or

unfair against morally *good/neutral people*. All have sinned & have blasphemed him. And so he seals the fate of some who continually harden their hearts.

4. IF Isaiah preaches a soft (feel-good) message, then his generation would be superficially at ‘peace’.
 - a) >> if he preaches the Truth, his message will drive them farther from God
 - b) God says: your preaching will actually bring judgment & seal people’s *doom*.
 - **Which will he choose? Faithful or a Fraud? Obedient or Disobedient? A spokesman for God or an entertainer of people. Will he tickle ears or herald Truth?**
 - As Trapp wrote, Isaiah would “Preach them to hell.”
5. Isaiah’s calling is not to SUCCESS (as the world defines it) but to FAITHFULNESS (to convey God’s message).
 - a) he must be faithful even though it seems that he is not being FRUITFUL.
 - b) keep proclaiming. Keep preaching. Keep declaring. Keep going. DO NOT STOP.
 - ❖ *All of this in Isaiah 6 destroys the prosperity gospel. // Isaiah 6 stabs the health & wealth gospel in the heart. /// Isaiah 6 smashes the weak, entertaining, ‘afraid-to-talk-about-sin’ pansy preaching of the day”. It crushes feel-good ‘sermonettes’ to tickle ears.*
6. The people are hard. They have sinned. They are guilty. They are hardened.
 - a) > So God decided this is the appropriate time to punish them.
 - b) > for many of them, their opportunity of grace is *over*; the door of mercy is *Shut*; the hope of heaven is *lost*.
 - c) > judgment is coming; it is inevitable; hope is gone; doom is sure. God’s wrath like a tsunami is inescapably coming & will destroy
7. **Consider this: At some point: these hardened people who refuse to hear God’s words from the Preacher’s mouth will pass the opportunity of grace = they will reach the place of “No return” & No Hope.**
8. hear this: every time you hear the Word of God preached, you come away from that encounter to his truth a little CLOSER to God or a little further away from GOD >> either more softened toward GOD or more hardened toward GOD..
 - a) Listen: SEEK THE LORD while he may be found; call upon Him while he is near (Isa 55.6). **What a MISSION. What an INVITATION! Come at once!**

C. v.11-13a - The Duration

1. Isaiah doesn’t ask: “WHY?” or “WHY ME?” >>> but he asks: “HOW LONG?”
 - a) In Marines, the instructor says “JUMP” and then you ask: “Yes sir, how long?”
2. It’s like Isaiah’s cry of dismay or lamentation: God I *understand* — but HOW LONG? >>> God’s answer: preach until God’s judgment came — till the Babylonian Exile had occurred and the people are deported
3. preach until the LAND is a place of “burned out stumps”. It’ll be burnt, charred, ruined - like what happens when trees are cut down (v.13) and only a stump is left in

the ground & then the remaining brush is all burnt up. > it is hopeless, grim, dark, judgment, fire.

4. > preach! Preach! Preach!
 - a) v.13 - 'the TENTH left in the land = refers to the poor who were left in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24.14).
5. **Hear this & never forget it** —> SUCCESS in ministry is not big numbers and flashy results but faithfulness to God.

IV. **FAITH!** - Isaiah saw the hope (13)

- theme: *Isaiah saw the hope even amidst hardship (call it: LOOK DOWN)*
- A. in a tough message, God gives a promise of hope!
- B. The last little phrase: “The Holy Seed is its stump” — When the judgment comes and the land is burnt & charred. One of the stumps in the ground will still have life in it. It’s like: one of the burnt-out stumps will have a green leaf, a little stump, a sign of life.
- C. HOLY SEED is the **stump**:
 1. Israel - the seed to refer to Abraham’s descendants > the nation will survive (Rom 11)
 2. **Messiah** - Isaiah sees Messiah as a branch — b/c of Isa 11.1 & 53:1-2! This hope is the little, humble stump that remains! *A tiny little branch, shoot, stump, ray of life!*
 3. a child growing in poverty (ch.7) living in a land of darkness (ch.8-9) & coming forth as a shoot from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11.1).
- D. Let us worship & praise the King — Have faith in/trust His promises!
- E. **AND — hear this: John 12.41 says that the Holy One high & lifted up on heaven’s throne that Isaiah saw is Jesus Christ! And the Suffering Servant is Jesus. The King of holy glory is the suffering, humble servant who will die to atone for the sins of his people in Isa 53!**

Later in John 12 — we read of this *Holy King* — “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness — but he who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has one who judges him... the word which I spoke... (John 12.46-48)