

Here Am I

Introduction. In the first part of Isaiah, King Uzziah has died and the throne of Judah is empty. In chapter 6, like all men of faith, Isaiah turned to God for his help and comfort, and in that hour of seeming defeat, he experienced a great spiritual blessing. He saw that the throne of heaven was still occupied by Jehovah God. Let's look at the threefold vision God gave to Isaiah.

I. ***The Upward Look -- He Saw The Lord (6:1-4)***

- A. Like all devoted citizens, Isaiah had venerated King Uzziah. For fifty-two years, Uzziah had led Judah with peace and prosperity. It was an era of expansion and achievement. It was unfortunate that the king had rebelled against the word of God and died a leper (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-23). He died around 740 B.C.
- B. Isaiah realized that though the nation had prospered materially, it was in terrible condition spiritually. Although Judah was to experience three more good kings, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah, the history of the nation during this period was one of decline; her days of glory were gone.
- C. God lifted Isaiah's eyes from himself and his people to the throne of heaven. There might be confusion and unrest on earth, but there was perfect peace in heaven. God was seated in majestic power and glory. People on earth might be recalling the shame of Uzziah's death as a leper, but there was no shame or shadow of failure in heaven. The vision of the Lord's transcendence never left Isaiah. The exaltation of Israel's great God is a frequent theme in his prophecies (2:10-22; 37:16; 40:12-26; 57:15).
 1. God's power is sometimes manifested in a physical tremor (Exodus 19:18; Acts 4:31) and His presence in a cloud of smoke (Isaiah 4:5; Exodus 33:9).
 2. So the God who normally hides Himself from the senses occasionally made Himself known in a form accessible to them, and He ultimately did so in the consummate unveiling of Himself in His Son (1 John 1:1-4).
- D. This is the only Bible passage where heavenly beings are called "seraphims." They are part of the great variety of heavenly beings created by God (along with others such as angels, archangels, principalities, powers, and cherubim). The seraphs are bright creatures, for the word means "burning ones;" yet they hide their faces from the greater brightness and the glory of the Lord.

Covering the feet suggests humility.

- E. As each seraph cries, "Holy, holy, holy," there seems to be a responsive cry from another. Because three is the number of divinity, the threefold recital of "holy" probably indicates the absolute holiness of Him who sits on the throne; He is absolutely separate from all sin or uncleanness. Contrary to pantheism, which holds that God is identical with the universe, Isaiah sees Him as separate from and above His creation. The whole creation reveals and expresses the glory of its Creator.
- F. The word "glory" is used of God in His manifestation to His creatures. The essence of deity is inscrutable, but something of His glory can be seen if God is pleased to disclose it (Exodus 33:17-23; Ezekiel 1:28). In John 12:41, after quoting Isaiah 6:10, John said that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus. We see events from a human perspective; the angels see them from God's viewpoint.
- G. "Lord of hosts" is Isaiah's favorite name for God; it is translated this way fifty-four times in the KJV. "Lord of the armies" is what it means. The prophet also calls God "the Holy One of Israel" twenty-five times in the KJV. Jehovah is the God of holy warfare, the God who opposes sin and defeats the enemy. Isaiah needed to realize this fact in a day when Judah appeared to be defeated.

II. ***The Inward Look -- He Saw Himself (6:5-7)***

- A. A true vision of God and His holiness always makes us realize our own sinfulness and failure. The people of the Old Testament always felt a deep apprehension at the prospect of seeing God. This must have been underlined still more for Isaiah as he saw even the unfallen seraphs covering their faces in the presence of the Most High. Job saw God and repented (Job 42:6). Peter cried out, "I am a sinful man" when he saw Christ's power (Luke 5:8). In chapter 5 the prophet had pronounced six woes upon the wicked and ungodly world. This, the seventh woe, he pronounces upon himself, for in a world of sin "there is none righteous" (Romans 3:10).
- B. When Isaiah confessed his sins, he mentioned specifically his unclean lips. Of course, unclean lips are the products of an unclean heart. The prophet knew that he could not faithfully preach for the Lord unless he was prepared and cleansed. The prophet realized that even the purest person is unclean when measured by the divine standard.
- C. God met the prophet's need: He sent a seraphim to cleanse him with a coal from the altar of incense. How tragic it would be to have the throne without the altar! There would be conviction of

sin, but no cleansing. Sin and the guilt of sin must be removed or blotted out if one is to be an acceptable servant of the Lord. Isaiah may well have learned from this experience that sinful human beings can join in the worship of the "burning ones" only when purified by the fire of God (4:4). There is a wonderful word of encouragement here in that God quickly answers prayer and cleanses us (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-18; 1 John 1:9). He longs to equip us to serve Him.

- D. True worship ought to lead to preaching and service. It constantly amazes me how people's faith cannot bring them to all the assemblies and yet they think it is going to get them to heaven. Too many Christians want to hold on to a "spiritual experience" with the Lord, rather than be prepared to go and tell the good news to others.

III. ***The Outward Look -- He Saw The Need (6:8-13)***

- A. The prophet is no longer wrapped up in his own needs; he wants to do the will of God. He is no longer burdened by sin; he has been cleansed. He is no longer discouraged; he knows that God is on the throne. Now he is ready to go to work. Isaiah is not coerced into service; rather, his will makes its ready response as a grateful reaction to God's forgiving grace. In vs. 8, we see him faced with the challenge to personal commitment. Jesus told His disciples, "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 16:24; 19:21).
- B. God could have sent one of the seraphim, and it would have been obeyed instantly and perfectly. But when it comes to proclaiming His word, God must use human lips. It was not an easy commission God gave to the prophet, for the nation was in no mood to hear his messages of sin and judgment. As you read chapters 1-5, you understand the burden that God gave Isaiah. The nation was prosperous; why preach about sin? When people are rich, full and satisfied, they do not believe that judgment is coming.
- C. Vss. 9-10 are quoted six times in the New Testament (Matthew 13:13-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:25-28; Romans 11:8). What God is saying is that the word of God has this hardening and blinding effect on sinners who will not listen and yield. The sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay. Note the downward steps in John 12: they would not believe (vs. 37); therefore, they could not believe (vs. 39); and thus they should not believe (vs. 40) because they had sealed their own doom.
- D. The tone of Isaiah's question in vs. 11 is one of lament. The prophets did not find God's message of judgment easy to utter

(Jeremiah 1:6, 8, 17; Ezekiel 2:3-8). They belonged to the nation they addressed and must often have wept for its sins and its certain judgment (Jeremiah 9:1; 14:17).

- E. The servant of God is to proclaim God's word regardless of how people respond. It took a great deal of faith on Isaiah's part to obey such a commission. Isaiah pictures the nation as a tree cut down; the stump remains and a new shoot can grow from it (11:1). There would be a remnant that would heed the word.
1. John 1:43-46 gives us a great example. A televangelist once said, "Television is the most effective tool in evangelism today." He is dead wrong. The most effective tool in evangelism is and always has been you and me. The New Testament church grew without television, gimmicks, and elaborate programs.
 2. We need to get it through our heads that programs do not convert anybody; people convert people. A survey of new members in churches revealed that by far the number one reason why they attend their church is because somebody in that church invited them.
 3. We have to lay aside spiritual lethargy, growing inclusivism, busyness, fear of rejection, a desire to be tolerant, losing the habit of teaching, lack of accountability, and a failure to invite if we are ever going to have opportunities to teach someone. Churches must become more aggressive in trying to teach the lost.

Conclusion. When Isaiah walked out of the temple that day, he was no longer a mourner; he was a minister. He not merely a spectator; he was a participant. God had equipped him to do the job. Knowing that God was on the throne, and that God had called and commissioned him, he was ready to preach the word and be faithful unto death. What a splendid example for us to follow today.