

# Isaiah 6:1-13

## Isaiah's Commission

### I. Isaiah's Vision (6:1-2)

6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

--King Uzziah died about 740 BC (Albright's date was 742, others would date his death at 739.). After Uzziah's long, prosperous reign, his death must have produced a difficult transition to his son's reign. With Assyria slowly expanding to the west, uncertainty and anxiety certainly was rampant.

--"I saw the Lord." Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord. From the beginning of this passage, the center is "the Lord" & later "the LORD Almighty." The focus is not the vision, the Seraphim, or Isaiah. The focus is the Lord.

--In the vision, the Lord fills the temple, i.e. He is everything. He is in the highest place, exalted above everything else. God as "exalted" is a common phrase in the OT, especially in the Psalms. Only God is worthy of praise.

--This is a royal vision, with the Lord pictured as a king, in a royal setting. What began in the temple transforms into a throne room. God is the sovereign ruler of the universe. Little does the prophet know that the Sovereign is soon to pronounce an unexpected judgment.

### II. The Seraphim's Cry (6:3-4)

3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

--The Seraphim appear as angelic attendants to the king—the Lord. Their primary service is worship, which is seen in their cry of worship.

--"Holy, holy, holy"—God's holiness is His "separateness," that which sets Him apart from humanity, and even angelic beings. The Lord is above all other creation. He is holy. He is all-powerful. He alone deserves our praise and worship.

--"The whole earth is full of his glory"—His "glory" is the physical manifestation of His presence to humanity. His glory was present in the tabernacle.

### III. Isaiah's Response (6:5)

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

--In this position before God (which from some OT perspectives would result in certain death), Isaiah sees only the utter holiness of the Lord and his own uncleanness. He recognizes his own sin and knows that he cannot possibly stand in God's presence.

--“Lips” are representative of the whole body. This certainly has nothing to do with designating bad speech, rather his complete sinfulness. The reference to “lips” may appear because of the importance of the spoken word for the prophet.

#### IV. Isaiah’s Cleansing (6:6-7)

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

--When Isaiah acknowledged his utter desperation before the holy God, the Lord provided an avenue for cleansing. Two things seem important here:

--1. The cleansing comes from the action of the king, not from the action of the prophet. In fact, only the complete acknowledgement of helplessness precipitates the act of cleansing.

--2. The cleansing of sin allows further interaction with God, as seen in the next passage. We must acknowledge our sin and receive the cleansing of God in order to hear his call and message to us, His servants.

#### V. Isaiah’s Commission (6:8-13)

--8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

--Here, Isaiah is an audience to the heavenly council of the Lord. The only proper response to God’s call for a servant is “Here am I. Send me!” Isaiah has fallen before God in humble fear, but the holy coal cleansed him. Now he offers his own service to holy Lord—the proper response to God’s desire to use humanity to carry His message.

--9 He said, “Go and tell this people: “‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ 10 Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. {[9,10] Hebrew; Septuagint ‘You will be ever hearing, but never understanding; you will be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ [10] This people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes} Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

--God commissions Isaiah to a mission, but it is a mission of judgment. This is a difficult passage. Why does God send Isaiah to a message that is already decided?

1. An editor (or the prophet himself) is looking back upon Isaiah’s ministry and reflecting upon the failure of his mission.
2. Because of their continued rebellion against their covenant with the Lord, Isaiah’s words will be further confirmation of their commitment to sin. They have broken the covenant, and their response to Isaiah will confirm that broken covenant and bring destruction upon them.

--11 Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?"

And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, 12 until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. 13 And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."

--“How long?”

--The mission of judgment will continue until the land is completely in ruin. The land was the primary physical promise of the covenant between Israel and Yahweh. It was the sign that they were indeed His chosen people. Now judgment would not be complete until the destruction and loss of the land was complete.

--“Holy seed”

--Could hope still be present in this utter desolation? Can life begin again after a forest fire? Can life happen after total destruction? The answer is, of course, “Yes!”

--A “holy seed,” elsewhere called a “stump,” “root,” or “remnant,” will indeed remain and eventually new life would spring from that root. This message of hope intermingles constantly in Isaiah with the word of judgment and destruction.