

“Here Am I”

Introduction. Isaiah has been called “the prince of prophets” for good reason: He prophesied of Christ more than any other Old Testament prophet. But there is more to gain from the book than the revelations of Jesus.

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 the throne of Heaven was still occupied by God, and He gave a threefold vision to Isaiah that helps us recognize our duty as His children.

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

- A. Like all devoted citizens, Isaiah had venerated King Uzziah (Azariah). For 52 years, Uzziah led Judah with peace and prosperity. It was an era of expansion and achievement. It was unfortunate that the king rebelled against God’s word and died a leper (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-23). He died around 740 B.C.
- B. Isaiah knew 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.
- D. The vision of the Lord’s transcendence never left Isaiah, for 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 (Exodus 33:9; Isaiah 4:5).
 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).
- E. 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 glory of the Lord. Covering the feet suggests humility.
- F. Because three is the number of divinity, the recital of “Holy, holy, holy” probably indicates the absolute holiness of Him who sits on the throne; He is completely 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.
- G. The word “glory” is used of God in His manifestation to His creatures. The essence of deity is difficult to fathom, 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.

- H. "Lord of hosts" is Isaiah's favorite name for God; it is translated this way 54 times in the KJV. "Lord of the armies" is what it means. The prophet also calls God "the Holy One of Israel" 25 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 felt a deep apprehension at the prospect of seeing God. This must have been emphasized 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, "I am a sinful man, O Lord" when he saw Christ's power (Luke 5:8). In chapter 5 the prophet had pronounced six woes on the wicked and ungodly world. This, the seventh woe, he pronounces on himself, for in a world of sin "there is none righteous" (Romans 3:10, 23).
- B. When Isaiah confessed his sins, he mentioned specifically his unclean lips. Of course, unclean lips are the products of an unclean heart (Mark 7:20-23). The prophet knew he could not faithfully preach for the Lord unless he was prepared and cleansed (Hebrews 10:19-24; 1 Peter 1:22).
- C. God met the prophet's need: He sent a seraphim to cleanse him with a coal from the altar of incense. Sin has to be removed or blotted out for one to be an acceptable servant of the Lord (Acts 3:19).
- D. 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, and true worship should lead to preaching and service. Isaiah received the most vivid reminder that he was a child of the King and therefore needed to be pure. How is it any different for us?

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, shows a grateful reaction to God's forgiving grace. In v. 8, we see him faced with the challenge to personal commitment (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 16:24; 19:21).
- B. God could have sent one of the seraphim, and it would obeyed instantly and perfectly. But when it comes to proclaiming His word, God must use human lips (Romans 10:14; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). 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 better understand the burden 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. Verses 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). The word of God has a 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 (v. 37); therefore, they could not believe (v. 39); and thus they should not believe (v. 40) because they had sealed their own doom.
- D. The tone of Isaiah's question in v. 11 is one of lament. The prophets did not find God's message of judgment easy to proclaim (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; Luke 19:41).
- E. A servant 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 is a great example. 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. So put away lethargy, tolerance, busyness, fear of rejection, losing the practice of teaching, lack of accountability, and a failure to invite and take that chance to teach!

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 until death (Revelation 2:10). What a splendid example for us!