

I Saw the King

7.25.18

Isaiah Series

Isaiah 6:1-13

1. In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the King.

A. Uzziah was a great king.

1. He was considered one of the greatest kings Israel ever had.
2. He restored a level of respectability and prosperity to Israel not seen since the days of Solomon.
3. The loss of Uzziah was a big blow to the people of Israel.
4. During this time, Assyria becomes a major threat again and the future outlook of Israel is bleaker than it has been for decades.

B. It was during this time that Isaiah had a vision of the Lord.

1. Isaiah says he saw the "Lord".
2. This expression is a heavy and loaded expression.
 - a. The expression is easily translated "I saw the Sovereign".
 - b. In other words, Isaiah is saying, "In the year the earthly King Uzziah died, I saw the sovereign King of the Universe."
3. When times feel hopeless, when we are at our lowest, what we need the most is a visitation by the King of the Universe.
 - a. We must be reminded who it is that is in charge.
 - b. We must be reminded that it is King Jesus who rules and reigns.

c. A visitation of the Holy God is enough to bring us out of our discouragement and back to the task at hand.

C. The Lord, the King, is seated on a throne.

1. A throne is a symbol of power.
2. It is on the throne that life and death are decreed.
3. It is at this throne that earthly kings and kingdoms are brought up and struck down.
4. This is a picture of God exercising absolute power, authority and majesty.
5. And Isaiah "feels the raw edge of terror at being where humanity does not dare to go" (Oswalt, 177).
 - a. It was not normal for a man to see God, yet here Isaiah was.
 - b. And what Isaiah sees is not some apologetic wimp or cowering deity, but God seated on a "high and lofty" throne.
 - c. Immediately Isaiah is approached by the unapproachable God.
 - d. In an instant, Isaiah is confronted by God in his awesomeness, power, and holiness.

D. And the hem of his robe filled the temple.

1. What does Isaiah mean by this?
2. To help us understand, we must look at another theophany (appearance of God) in Exodus 24:9-11.
 - a. When Moses and his leaders saw God, they cannot begin to describe Him.
 - b. So what do they describe?
 1. They describe what was under God's feet.

2. Which was pavement made of a precious blue.

3. The rest of God was either completely hidden or indescribable.

3. In Isaiah's experience, God was indescribable as well.

a. Isaiah cannot describe God.

b. Isaiah could not illustrate or communicate the beauty of God at this moment.

c. The only thing Isaiah can see or reveal was something unconnected to God: The hem of the garment.

1. We cheat God when we try to describe him in merely human terms.

2. Isaiah could only say that the hem of his robe filled the temple.

3. What He is saying is that He could not describe God, or picture Him for us, but can only say that He filled the place!

d. We cannot elevate ourselves to a level where we can comprehend God, that is why we are dependent upon God revealing Himself to us.

E. Isaiah's experience happens at the Temple.

1. We don't know if this was the earthly temple or the spiritual that Hebrews refers to.

2. But the imagery is that in this divine moment, the curtain that separated humanity from the Holy of Holies was removed and the Ark of the Covenant replaced with the Throne of God.

3. The majesty of God is on display and the Temple cannot contain the greatness of God.

2. The Seraphim create an atmosphere suitable for the King of all Creation.

A. The name Seraphim refers to something "fiery".

1. Fire is associated with the holiness of God.
2. It is very possible that God created the Seraphim for the purpose to worship Him and to represent His holiness.

B. Their description is very minimal.

1. Isaiah only saw their wings.
2. Their grandeur and beauty were far more than Isaiah could comprehend at the moment.
3. A commentary on Isaiah offers the best explanation for what these wings represent:

...“the seraphim typify the appropriate response to God’s holiness. As Smith said, they are all wings and voice, perfectly ready for praise and service. One pair of wings is used to cover their faces, for even the most perfect of creatures dare not gaze brazenly into the face of the Creator. The sight would be too much. Another pair covers their feet. The precise meaning of this action is not clear. The Targum has “body” for “feet” and says the body was covered so that it might not be seen... In any case, the sense is the same, with the part standing for the whole body. As the creature should not look upon the Creator, so the created should not be displayed in the sight of the Creator. But to be in the presence of the Creator is not primarily to be prostrated with awe. Rather, it is to be filled with praise. So, with the third pair of wings the seraphim were flying, all the while calling out their ecstatic song.¹

C. The Seraphim declare the holiness of God!

1. Depending on the translation, the name of God changes here.
 - a. Some say Lord of Hosts.
 - b. Others say the Lord of Armies.
 - c. NIV says the Lord Almighty.
 - d. The Lord is all of this and much more!

2. Isaiah's most common title for God in this book is "the Holy One of Israel".

a. It is found 26 times in Isaiah and only 6 times elsewhere.

b. This encounter with the holiness of God had a life-changing impact on Isaiah.

c. What does holy mean? "holiness is distinctness, the distinctness of the divine from all other things"¹

d. The Seraphim declared that God is distinct, separated, and set apart from every other thing.

e. For someone or something to be holy is to share in an attribute that only comes from God.

1. Believers are told to be holy, just like God is holy.

2. This is impossible in ourselves, but through Jesus, we can be set apart from all that is base and sinful.

3. Not only does His glory fill the temple but the Seraphim see that His glory fills the whole earth.

a. I've heard it said that God's glory is an expression of everything that God is.

b. The tangible demonstration of God is his glory.

c. "Holiness is God's hidden glory; glory is God's all-present holiness."²

4. As the Seraphim declared the glory and holiness of God, the foundations of the doors shook.

¹ John N. Oswalt, [*The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 180.

² J. A. Motyer, [*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 77.

a. Shaking is the customary reaction of earth to the divine presence (*cf.* Ex. 19:18; Hab. 3:3–10).³

b. The temple and Earth couldn't help but shake in the presence of God!

c. The doors and smoke are mentioned for a specific reason:

1. They represented the limits of Isaiah's access to the presence of God.

2. He could come no closer than the doors, and the smoke hindered his vision.

3. A common mistake in our casual culture is the casual approach we have to God.

a. God is approachable but still Holy.

b. We can come boldly to God but never irreverently.

c. To treat God as something common is to blasphemy.

d. It is never appropriate for any of God's creation to speak lowly of God!

D. The description and ministry of the Seraphim describe the atmosphere where God's presence resides.

1. Worshipful.

2. Holy (distinct)

3. Powerful.

4. What they declared was more than hype, it was truth and reality, and Isaiah felt and experienced it in a deep way.

³ J. A. Motyer, [*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 77.

3. The Presence of God overwhelms Isaiah.

A. When confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah's reaction was a feeling of ruin.

1. We often think of the presence of God as something that feels good and tingly.

a. It seems like many of our experiences with God feel the same as when we watch an inspiring movie.

b. We associate goosebumps and a chill with the presence of God.

c. Sometimes this is true.

2. But if we were to ask Isaiah what he felt in the presence of God he would say:

a. "Woe is me for I am ruined..."

b. The ESV says, "I am lost".

c. For Isaiah, the presence of God was something terrible.

d. There was no mistaking what he was feeling for anything else other than the holiness of God.

B. Woe is a common theme in Isaiah.

1. Part of Isaiah's ministry was pronouncing woe upon Israel and upon the neighboring nations.

2. Up until this point, Isaiah was aware of the dangerous position Israel was in with the loss of Uzziah, and then he was aware of the awesome presence of God and the Seraphim.

a. Now, Isaiah is aware of himself and his desperate position he was in.

b. In the presence of God, Isaiah fell before Him and cried out woe to himself.

c. The prophet who was to declare a warning to the nations now proclaims a warning to himself.

d. It wasn't enough that Israel, the priests, or the king were unholy.

e. Isaiah was unholy and in need of God's redemption.

3. Prophetic announcement is not enough. Personal confrontation is necessary.⁴

a. Sin wasn't just something Isaiah could call out of other people.

b. He also had to call out the sin and iniquity in his own life.

c. You are not called to confront the sins of others until you deal with your own sin first.

C. In the presence of God, Isaiah confesses his sin and iniquity.

1. Remember from last week in Isaiah 53 that iniquity carries the idea of the guilt and condemnation of sin.

a. It's the after effect of sin.

b. What we feel when we do something unholy in the presence of a holy God.

2. Isaiah declares that he was a man of unclean lips.

a. What did Isaiah mean by this phrase?

b. To be unclean was to not have the character of God.

c. Our lips, or mouths, reveal what is deep inside of us "For out of the abundance of the heart our mouths speak".

d. Isaiah's expression is a confession that his heart and his mouth do not belong to God.

e. If his "lips" belonged to God, then his words would be fully occupied with praise to God like that of the Seraphim.

⁴ John N. Oswalt, [The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 182.

f. But in the presence of the Holy God and the holy Seraphim, Isaiah realized how far from holy he really was.

D. Mercifully, Isaiah does not stay in this position very long.

1. One of the Seraphim takes a coal from the altar that is before God and touches Isaiah's lips.

a. In the natural, this would have been incredibly painful yet no pain is mentioned on Isaiah's behalf.

b. Isaiah didn't even ask to be made clean.

2. The ministry of forgiveness was provided for Isaiah without him asking or knowing what to ask.

a. Isn't that exactly how God deals with us?

b. We reach a point where we realize our sinfulness but cannot save ourselves.

c. And at that moment, the Spirit of God comes to us and applies the forgiveness Jesus has already paid for.

d. What should be painful becomes joyful because Jesus received our pain upon himself and gives to us the love of God.

3. God has a provision for sin and iniquity whereby their effect is mitigated and their power is broken.⁵

a. In an instant, the power of sin over Isaiah is broken,

b. His sin is paid for.

c. And the forgiveness opens a new door:

d. The door to speak on behalf of God and proclaim is Word to the people.

⁵ John N. Oswalt, [*The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 184.

4. Isaiah's call came out of a deep sense of the holiness and power of God.

A. Isaiah's calling to be a prophet is one of the most amazing encounters in the Bible.

1. Up to this point, God has not yet spoken.
2. The Seraphim have and Isaiah has, but God has not.
3. But now that Isaiah has been forgiven and cleansed, a voice is heard asking, "Who should I send? Who will go for us?"

B. The Lord permits Isaiah to hear God ask the heavenly council to ask the question:

1. Who will go?
2. God isn't directly asking Isaiah.
3. The question is broad and general.
4. But Isaiah, who has just experienced the presence and power of God, who has just been made clean cannot remain still or silent any longer.
 - a. The God who is asking is too holy, the question too huge, and the potential disappointment too great for no one to respond.
 - b. Isaiah must respond, and so he says, "Here I am, send me."

C. There is no coercion involved in this.

1. And Isaiah does not need to be forced to serve God.
2. Those who need to be coerced are perhaps too little aware of the immensity of God's grace toward them.⁶

⁶ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 186.

3. Whatever the task, and whatever the cost, the answer will be yes for those who have experienced the grace and power of God.

a. When we become aware of God's love towards us, we cannot say no.

b. When we get a glimpse of the holiness and majesty of God, there will be no hesitation on our part.

c. When God asks, our hands will rise faster than our minds can think.

d. **There can only be one response to God and that answer is YES!**

D. How could Isaiah serve God through his whole lifetime?

1. How did Isaiah deal with the threats of exile?

2. How could Isaiah process the woes and messages of destruction he was called to tell his people?

3. How was Isaiah not overwhelmed by the immensity of the task?

4. It was through an encounter with the Almighty God that Isaiah realized who it was that was calling Him.

5. When you know who God is, no one else can scare you.

How should I respond to this message?

A. **Before you can say yes to God, you must confess to God.**

1. The Lord is dealing with some of here tonight.

2. Although I have not preached on any specific sin or failure, the holiness of God has a way of showing us where we fall short.

3. Tonight, we come before a holy God and we are in need of forgiveness.

4. If we would be honest with ourselves, there are areas of our lives that need to change.

5. The first thing I want us to pray for tonight is that we will have the boldness to allow God to deal with our sins.

B. Second, that we will have the boldness to say yes to God and his calling for us.

1. There are specific and general callings.

2. Isaiah was specifically called to go to Israel with a specific message.

a. My specific calling is to be pastor of Licking A/G.

b. You are my specific calling.

3. But the general call is for everyone, everywhere.

a. We are all called to go and make disciples and teaching others about Jesus.

b. We are all called to share the hope of Jesus with the lost around us.

c. We are all called to be lights of redemption in a dark world.

4. Some of you tonight are having a hard time saying yes to God.

a. Maybe He is calling you to something specific.

b. IF so, say yes and God has a way of providing exactly what He wants you to do.

c. Some of us just simply need to say yes to God in the general calls before God will be specific with you.

d. Tonight is the night that we come before God and say yes to God.

ⁱ John N. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 179–180.