

Isaiah Lesson 5 Articles

(6:1–3) Isaiah saw the Lord (*'adonay*, the sovereign one) as an exalted king on the throne of his heavenly temple. His train (robes) filled the whole place (6:1). According to the Apostle John, Isaiah saw Jesus' glory (John 12:39–41).

Seraphim (flame-like angelic beings) stood about the heavenly throne waiting to do the bidding of the King. Each had six pairs of wings. One pair shielded the face from God's glory; one pair covered the lower body parts in modesty; and one pair was used to hover. In their antiphonal singing the seraphim praised God for his holiness and his omnipotence. They extolled him for manifesting his glory throughout all the earth. The heavenly temple shook with the mighty strains of the hymn of these angels. Smoky clouds of incense filled the entire temple and shielded the eyes of the prophet from looking directly upon the glory of deity (6:2–4).

(6:5–7) Isaiah let his audience know that before he pronounced his woes on others, he had first pronounced a woe upon himself. Having become aware of the holiness of God, he knew that his own sinfulness meant doom ("I am ruined"). He had just heard holy lips praise God; he now became aware of the uncleanness of his own lips. He was unfit to preach, or even to praise God in his wretched condition (6:5).

One of the seraphim touched Isaiah's lips with a hot coal from the altar of incense. In this visional and symbolic gesture the young man received assurance that his sins had been purged (6:6–7). Martin has observed that God does not want and will not use unclean instruments in his service.⁵

(6:8–13) Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Who will go for us?" The plural pronoun seems to point to the pluralistic unity of the Godhead. One God speaks, but three distinct persons in the Godhead are involved. Reverence compels Isaiah to say as little as possible. Two words in the Hebrew give his positive answer (6:8). Martin observes that the *woe* of confession (v. 5) is followed by the *lo* of cleaning (v. 7), and that in turn by the *go* of commission (v. 9).

Men who refuse God's Word become ever more hardened to its influence. Isaiah was warned at the outset that his preaching would "make the heart of this people fat," i.e., their understanding would become dull and sluggish. His auditors would become spiritually blind and deaf (6:9f.).

The pessimistic forecast provoked a despairing question from the fledgling prophet. How long must he continue to preach a message which would cause his people to entrench themselves ever deeper in sin? God's answer: he must continue to preach until his predictions of devastation and deportation had been completely fulfilled. Then only would he be relieved of the responsibility to preach (6:11f.).

One slight glimmer of hope penetrated the dark outlook for Judah. A tithe of the population would survive the judgment. Even that remnant, however, would experience severe persecution. Those who listened to the prophet and embraced God's holiness would be like a stump in the land. From that stump a new Israel would emerge (6:13).¹

The year was 739 b.c. It was the twelfth year of Jotham's coregency, three years after the death of Israel's great king, Jeroboam II. According to tradition this may have been the actual year in which, on the banks of the Tiber River across the Mediterranean, Rome was founded!

In Judah it was the year King Uzziah died. For Isaiah, it was the year he saw the Lord.²

6:3 —When the angels cry out that God is "holy," they mean that He is absolutely pure, completely separated from sin, righteous and just and spotless. So He tells us, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).³

⁵ Alfred Martin, *Isaiah: 'The Salvation of Jehovah'* (Chicago: Moody, 1956), p. 35.

¹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Is 6:1–13). Joplin, MO: College Press.

² Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (p. 366). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Is 6:3). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.