

Notes

Isaiah's Call to the Ministry (6:1–13)

- Chapter 6 records one of the most majestic visions of God & marks Isaiah's personal commissioning as a prophet. It explains why Isaiah proclaimed God's message faithfully even when it was rejected. Only after the nation is exposed in its sin in chapters 1-5 does chapter 6 reveal the prophet's call.

1. Isaiah's Call - A Vision of God's Holiness (6:1–4)

- This vision took place around 740 BC, *"in the year that King Uzziah died."* King Uzziah had ruled for 52 years, and his death brought national uncertainty. Yet Isaiah saw something greater: *"I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne..."* The earthly throne was empty - but the heavenly throne was occupied. Uzziah was dead - but the LORD was reigning. When human leadership fails, God remains sovereign, ruling over the affairs of our lives and the affairs of the world. Peace comes not from controlling circumstances, but from knowing the One who controls them.
- The imagery of God seated on a throne speaks of absolute authority. God alone occupies it. This vision gripped Isaiah with an awesome sense of:
 - God's Majesty - *"His train filled the temple."* His glory cannot be contained.
 - God's Holiness - *"Above it stood the seraphim..."* These heavenly beings surrounded the throne, crying: *"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."* Seraphim are fiery heavenly beings whose name means "to burn." They are depicted with six wings, expressing reverence before God, humility, and readiness for service.
- Holiness is the only divine attribute explicitly proclaimed three times in succession (cf. Rev 4:8).
 - In Hebrew thought, repetition intensifies meaning. God is not merely holy; He is infinitely, perfectly, uniquely holy.
 - "Holy" means "set apart." God is utterly distinct from sin, corruption, impurity, and imperfection. He is called "the Holy One of Israel."
 - Holiness is displayed in glory. God's holiness is not confined to heaven. Creation reflects His glory (Ps 19:1). Creation itself is a visible testimony to God's holiness - it displays His perfection in tangible form.
- The foundations shook, and the temple was filled with smoke (cf. Exo 19; 1 Kgs 8). God's presence is overwhelming and awe-inspiring. True worship begins with who God is - not with how we feel. We approach Him with reverence, acknowledging His supreme holiness and authority.

2. Isaiah's Confession - An Awareness of Sin (6:5-7)

- When Isaiah saw God's holiness, he saw his own sinfulness. He pronounced woe upon himself - *"Woe is me! for I am undone."* The word "undone" carries the idea of being ruined, cut off, or destroyed. Standing before a holy God, he was shattered. He confessed:
 - Personal Sin - *"I am a man of unclean lips."*
 - National Sin - *"I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."*Significantly, Isaiah confessed unclean lips - the very instrument of his ministry. Speech reveals the heart (Matt 15:18; Luke 6:45; Jas 3:2).
- Why was Isaiah undone? *"Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."* Throughout Scripture, encounters with God produce humility (Exo 3:6; Job 42:5-6; Luke 5:8). No one meets God casually and remains unchanged. Genuine encounters with God produce transformation (Eph 5:1-7).
- John 12:41 indicates that Isaiah saw Christ's glory. The apostle applies Isaiah's vision to the pre-incarnate Son - the Second Person of the Trinity (cf. Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). God in His essence cannot be seen (John 4:24; 1 Tim 6:16). No one can see God in His unveiled glory and live (Exo 33:18-20). Yet God reveals Himself in forms that can be perceived without destroying the beholder (e.g., the burning bush, Ezekiel's visions). God graciously accommodates Himself to human weakness (John 1:18). Isaiah saw a true revelation of the enthroned LORD in a perceivable form - and it shattered him. Against the brilliance of divine holiness, even his righteousness appeared deeply flawed.
- Isaiah's response challenges casual, flippant attitudes and entertainment-centered worship. Reverence is not old-fashioned - it is biblical. When we are gripped by God's holiness, worship deepens, sin becomes serious, repentance becomes natural, and reverence replaces casualness.
- A seraph touched Isaiah's lips with a live coal from the altar. Two symbols stand out: Altar = sacrifice; Coal = purification. God took the initiative. *"Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."* Isaiah's guilt was not ignored - it was removed. Sin must be dealt with, and it is dealt with through sacrifice. Ultimately, this points to Christ. Isaiah looked forward in promise; we look back to the cross (1 John 1:7-9).
- The lips that confessed sin were now prepared for service (Jer 1:9). Before Isaiah spoke for God publicly, his sin was dealt with personally. God's calling is always accompanied by His cleansing grace. Isaiah was made fit for ministry only after his sin was purged (2 Tim 2:21).

3. Isaiah's Commission - A Costly Call to Faithful Service (6:8-13)

- *"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* Isaiah saw the Lord; he confessed his sin; he was cleansed. Only then did he hear the voice of the Lord. Grace prepared him to hear. The shift from "I" to "us" hints at the plurality within the Godhead (Gen 1:26). Isaiah glimpsed this mystery long before its fuller revelation in the NT.
- Isaiah responded: *"Here am I; send me."* His response was immediate, wholehearted, and unconditional.
 - He did not presume to go - he asked to be sent. He desired to be the answer to God's question, but on God's terms. He placed himself entirely at God's disposal (cf. 1 Sam 3:4).
 - He was fit to serve because he had been cleansed. Cleansing produces true availability. God uses those who are humbled by holiness, honest about sin, cleansed by grace, and sensitive to His voice. He does not use perfect vessels - He uses cleansed vessels.
- Isaiah was sent to preach - and to be rejected (vv 9-10). His preaching would not produce widespread repentance but would instead expose Israel's hardness. Judicial hardening follows persistent rejection (Ps 81:11-12; Rom 1:24). This passage is later quoted by Jesus (Matt 13:14-15) to explain His use of parables, and by Paul (Acts 28:26-27) to explain Israel's unbelief. Success in God's eyes is faithfulness, not visible results. God measures obedience, not popularity.
- Isaiah asked, *"Lord, how long?"* The answer was sobering: *"Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant... and the land be utterly desolate."* Isaiah would preach until judgment ran its course. This prophecy anticipated the devastation of Judah, culminating historically in the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC (though Assyrian invasions preceded it).
- *"But yet in it shall be a tenth... the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."* The imagery shifts to a tree cut down, leaving only a stump. That stump is called "the holy seed." The "holy seed" refers first to the faithful remnant of Israel - those preserved by God through judgment (7:3; 10:21-22). Though many would perish or be exiled, God promised that a remnant would survive and return. Yet, as the phrase *"and shall be eaten"* suggests, even the remnant would undergo further refining judgment. Ultimately, the holy seed finds its fullest expression in the Messiah, the righteous Branch who springs from the stump of Jesse (11:1). Through Him, God will one day restore His people. Judgment is not God's final word - mercy is.