

## 6:1<sup>1</sup>

**In the year that King Uzziah died** This is an interesting way of identifying the timeframe of what will become a specific calling to Isaiah. There is no reason to assume this is the first time Isaiah hears from God as it says that he prophesied during “the days of Uzziah” in 1:1.<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 23 tell of the time when **Uzziah** was first a leper, and then eventually succumbed, presumably, to leprosy. Of course, Isaiah could have marked this vision with the beginning of Jotham’s reign, but he did not do so. That is how Isaiah introduces his life-changing experience at the temple in his 6th chapter. Certainly, it must have been Isaiah’s intent to write what was on his heart.<sup>3</sup> **Uzziah** was one of the greatest kings of Judah—a sovereign of great efficiency. His passing was of greatest concern in view of the ever-present, antagonistic Assyrians.<sup>4</sup>

**I saw the Lord. Saw** (*ra’ah*) is used 76 times in the book of Isaiah and has a myriad of usages from “gazing” to “considering” to “learning.”<sup>5</sup> He exclaims what he sees at the end of his confession in verse five (four verses later). Also, his calling is to deny, by the power of his preaching, the ability of the nation to “see” what he “saw” (6:9-10). There is no accident in this vocabulary. God granted Isaiah the ability to behold that from which he is being chosen to bar others. Indeed, Judah had a vacancy on their throne and this was precisely the need of which God was to meet. Without much interpretation, one can see the treatment for this nation’s woes was not any king that sits upon Judah’s throne, but rather the one and only King Who sits on His High throne as seen in 6:5.

This King was **the Lord** as distinguished from “the LORD” from verses three and five. **The Lord** is *Adonai* and is found 434 times in the Old Testament and is never used of anybody but Jehovah God, says Gesenius’ Lexicon.<sup>6</sup> Who is this on the throne which Isaiah saw? It is Jehovah God as found first in Genesis 15:2.<sup>7</sup> More than that, though. John 10:21 makes it clear that he saw the Messiah. When compared with other verses like John 1:18, Exodus 33:20, and 1 Timothy 6:16, it becomes evident that Isaiah did not see the “Divine essence,”<sup>8</sup> but instead saw pre-incarnate manifestations of “the Word” Who later “became flesh.” This term *adonai*

---

<sup>1</sup>See also under 6:3, 6:4, & 6:5.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes; Isaiah, Volume 1*. Notes on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 137.

<sup>3</sup>Who knows if his heart was especially burdened because of a disproportionate love for this king?

<sup>4</sup>Oswalt, 1986, 177.

<sup>5</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ra'ah* (Strong's 7200)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 31 Jan 2012. < [http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7200&t=KJV&cscs=Isa](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7200&t=KJV&cscs=Isa) >

<sup>6</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for '*Adonay* (Strong's 136)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 31 Jan 2012. < [http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H136&t=KJV&cscs=Isa](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H136&t=KJV&cscs=Isa) >

<sup>7</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *Yēhovih* (Strong's 3069)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 31 Jan 2012. < [http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3069&t=KJV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3069&t=KJV) >

<sup>8</sup>Barnes, 137.

contextually carries the idea of sovereignty and superiority, and that there are varying degrees or levels of the revelation of God's glory in Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

**sitting on a throne**, Here is a king in a **temple**, while **Uzziah** was set on his terminal bed for being a king seeking to be a priest (work in the **temple**).

**high and lifted up**, This **throne** (*kicce'*) is first introduced here within Isaiah and continues as a prevailing theme (used eight times) through chapter 14 when Lucifer desired the Lord's **throne** until chapter 66 when God declares that "Heaven is my **throne**."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the reader should see Isaiah making a point that the turmoil with Judah is really a Heavenly issue: "is God on the throne?" Psalm 11:4, Psalm 47:8, Psalm 97:1, Psalm 99:1, and even Isaiah 52:7 show us God is sitting on His **throne**.

**the train of His robe filled the temple**. The **train** comes from a word used only here in Isaiah and refers to the "hem" of the robe.<sup>11</sup> That is, the hem of his skirt filled the temple. Keil and Delitzsch see this as a whisking of Isaiah away into the Heavens,<sup>12</sup> and that should not be hard to accept as the only other time the Bible reader finds "seraphim" is during John's visit to Heaven recorded in Revelation chapter four.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, when one sees this overarching drama of Jehovah's throne being coveted by Lucifer "above the stars" (Isaiah 14:12-14) and this same throne being declared as "Heaven" (Isaiah 66:1), it should be easily permissible that this temple is indeed in Heaven.<sup>14</sup> This **King** was, oddly enough, not found at the palace of Uzziah or Jotham. Rather, He was found in the temple. The **Lord**—the Sovereign; the boss—was found in Heaven. His hem was so enormous that it filled the temple contained therein. This limited revelation of God—mentioning nothing about Him above the "train of his robe" is not surprising when considering the elders of Israel mentioned nothing about God other than the pavement under his feet in Exodus 24:10.

The nature of this experience has much in common with the Revelator's in Revelation 4 and the "things which must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:20). Taking the time to read Isaiah 2:1 and 2:17 seem to make it plausible that: not only is Isaiah in Heaven, but he is also in the future—seeing God when "the whole earth is full of His glory" (6:3).<sup>15</sup>

## 6:2

---

<sup>9</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*. The New American Commentary-An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 187.

<sup>10</sup>Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *kicce'* (*Strong's 3678*)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 31 Jan 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strong=H3678&t=KJV&cscs=Isa>>

<sup>11</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *shuwl* (*Strong's 7757*)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 31 Jan 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=H7757&t=KJV>>

<sup>12</sup> C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah, Volume VII*. Commentary of the Old Testament in Ten Volumes. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 188.

<sup>13</sup> They have six wings and they cry the same things: "Holy, Holy, Holy".

<sup>14</sup> Again, the book of Revelation speaks of a temple with all of the furniture depicted in the shadow in Solomon's day (Revelation 7:15-8:6).

<sup>15</sup> Smith, 187.

**Above it stood seraphim; Above** the train, that is.<sup>16</sup> The train which filled the temple were stationed<sup>17</sup> “seraphim” or “fiery ones” (*seraph*) and this same word was used even for the “fiery serpents” seen in Numbers chapter 21.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, this Hebrew word is found seven times in the Old Testament: Four of those times are in Isaiah, and only two of these are translated, rather transliterated “seraphim”—both in this chapter. Calvin sees this “fieriness” as both as “brightness” and a “swiftness” to carry out God’s message.<sup>19</sup> Of course, both of these are probable given what is known from other Scriptures such as Hebrews 1:7 (“His ministers a flame of fire”) and Hebrews 1:14 (“Are they all not ministering spirits sent forth to minister...?”). Transliteration notwithstanding, it is significant that the only place the translators saw these flaming ones as “non-serpents” was in this passage.

**each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.”** As stated above, these are also mentioned in Revelation chapter four. The connection could be made because of their location (around the throne), their number of wings, and their message of “Holy, Holy, Holy.” The holiness of God I stated by Towns as being “separate from moral evil and sin.” The mere mention of the term is “incomprehensible” and “undefined-able.” It is a quality of God that He simply is. He need did not “will Himself to be pure; He is pure.” It is that which God wishes for His people to remember, and “is the means by which He glorifies Himself.”<sup>20</sup> The fact that the seraphim announced God’s holiness as the summation of what was being displayed in this temple; and the fact that Isaiah’s summation of what he saw and heard was his confession of his impurity and uncleanness leads one to believe that God is most glorified in His holiness. God is most glorified in the reality of His being “drawn away common and ordinary” being displayed to His creation.<sup>21</sup>

## 6:3<sup>22</sup>

**And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy** This is what we hear when Heaven is opened up. Whatever God did in this past particular year, whatever it was—it was **holy**.

**is the LORD of hosts;”** The nature of this “cry” is such that Calvin calls it “antiphonal.”<sup>23</sup> That is to say that these “seraphim” were continually answering one another with these attributions of

---

<sup>16</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, 191; These commentators make argument that it is doubtful that flaming ministers would be stationed above the throne of the one of whom they express such awe. Therefore, it must be the train above which they are stationed.

<sup>17</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for `amad (Strong's 5975)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 1 Feb 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H5975&t=KJV>>; “Stationed” is one of the lexicon derived renderings with this source and seems more likely since the reader is later told that they were “flying.”

<sup>18</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for saraph (Strong's 8314)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 1 Feb 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H8314&t=KJV>>

<sup>19</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah—Volume First*. Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 202.

<sup>20</sup> Elmer L. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2008), 112.

<sup>21</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology- 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1998), 311.

<sup>22</sup> See under chapter 6 introduction & 6:5.

<sup>23</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 192.

holiness to God. Without clarity of how many were actually present, it may be assumed without detriment that they surrounded the throne and continually cried in “around.” Barnes goes as far as to say that “Holy” itself was said singularly by separate seraphim who, by course, echoed the other with their own resounding of “Holy” as a sort of Heavenly trio.<sup>24</sup> This is certainly not concrete as Isaiah mentions only “one” calling to another, and the posts shaking at that “one’s” voice.

Their attribution of “holiness”—given the One on the throne—was probably not an indication of Isaiah’s Trinitarianism, but rather a desire to emphasize<sup>25</sup> as in Jeremiah 7:4 and 22:29. God is never called the “Righteous One” or the “Gracious One”, but He is known as “the Holy One” as in Isaiah 40:25. Here, *Adonai* is being declared as “thrice holy” or “holy to the superlative degree.”<sup>26</sup> This is not just *adonai* though. This is *Yehovah*, the “Existing One.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, it has a contextual feeling of “Self-existing One” or “uncaused cause.” There is no reason to believe there were simply god-like figures in the temple. Rather, Isaiah was seeing his “Sovereign Creator.” Indeed this theme of the vision was timely as it placed in perspective both the past tragedy of a loved king’s death and the future toil involved in prophetic ministry.<sup>28</sup> “**Holy One**” is a title used for God 26 times in Isaiah and only six other times in the Old Testament.<sup>29</sup> **Holy** need not have an ethical application other than from the perspective that it means “distinctively different” or “other-like” and that man is completely unrighteous in the imaginations of his heart so that being “other than” man is to be “without sin” and “ethical” as Isaiah (a man) in this passage recognizes that the exact opposite of the One on the throne is sinful humanity—of which he is a part.

Much is written today by numerous authors on “holiness” or “sanctification.” To this author, nothing seemed more nebulous than the concept of “holiness”—much less anything like the “holiness of God” or “God’s transcendence.” Can anybody know God’s holiness? If a person cannot grasp God, will they ever grasp God’s holiness? His holiness is displayed for the sole purpose of having a Holy people to the praise of His glory in the spirit of Ephesians 1:3-12.

**The whole earth is full of His glory!**” This is the reality of God’s holiness. All **the earth** will know of it as promised of 11:9. It is spoken as if it is done. This is why the “flaming ones rejoice” as if this episode is concurrent with that spoken of by John in his Revelation’s 4<sup>th</sup> chapter not to be penned for another 800 years.

The design of all the work of God is that His holiness should become universally manifest, or what is the same thing, that His glory should become the fullness of the whole earth. This design of the work of God stands before God as eternally present; the

---

<sup>24</sup> Barnes, 139.

<sup>25</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 193.

<sup>26</sup> Barnes, 139.

<sup>27</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *Yehovah* (Strong's 3068)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 7 Feb 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=H3068&cscs=Isa&page=2>>

<sup>28</sup> Calvin, 204.

<sup>29</sup> Oswalt, 1986, 180.

seraphim also have it ever before them in its ultimate completion as the theme of their song of praise.<sup>30</sup>

Some have chosen to treat this allegorically as a sort of present reality.<sup>31</sup> However, the problem with this interpretation is that it does not continue with the themes of Isaiah, nor does it coalesce with the remainder of Scripture which says Creation does the opposite (Romans 8:20).

Are “end times” scenarios and immediate allegorical significance the only two possibilities here? Calvin seems to bring to it the significance of Isaiah’s imminent ministry. In other words, the ministry into which Isaiah was to be sent would take him beyond the bounds of Israel and Judah into the rest of the earth.<sup>32</sup> This reminds the reader of the entire Abrahamic promise referred to in Galatians 3:8. Therefore, the Isaiah perspective certainly allows for this fulfillment, but John’s reader of 90-100A.D. would then realize that much of the eschatological promises of Isaiah were not to be fulfilled in Isaiah’s immediacy, but rather in the “latter times” of Israel. A vision of God in His **glory** will break even the most respected of their pretext and piety. Which leads the reader to verse 4.

#### 6:4

**And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.** Both the door and the house are doubtless the “temple” of which 6:1 speaks, and Calvin suggested that this smoke is reminiscent of the pillars of cloud that appeared in Exodus 33:9 before Moses in the tabernacle or the glory cloud around God’s throne (Psalm 97:2).<sup>33</sup> Even Barnes makes a connection to the numerous temple references involving Solomon (1 Kings 8:10; 2 Chronicles 5:13).<sup>34</sup> The problem is that the Hebrew word in these references is *ʾanon*,<sup>35</sup> not *ʾashon* as is found in Isaiah 6:4. Moreover, 14 of the 15 times this Hebrew word is used before Isaiah 6:4, it is used in connection to fire or sacrifice—thus requiring “smoke” and not “cloud.”<sup>36</sup>

Even more contrasting is that God represented His presence with the cloud in those instances whereas the “smoke” accompanied His presence here.<sup>37</sup> Probably, the “smoke” of which 6:4 speaks is coming from the altar mentioned in 6:6. Doubtless this smoke is a foreshadowing (preparation) for the reader to have reinforced impact with both the altar in 6:6 and the “consuming” promised for the nation of Israel in 6:13. From where did this fire from the altar

---

<sup>30</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, 192.

<sup>31</sup> Barnes, 140.

<sup>32</sup> Calvin, 205.

<sup>33</sup> Calvin, 206-207.

<sup>34</sup> Barnes, 140.

<sup>35</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ʾanan* (Strong's 6051)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 6 Feb 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6051&t=KJV>>

<sup>36</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ʾashan* (Strong's 6227)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 6 Feb 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6227&t=KJV>>

<sup>37</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 194.

proceed? One commentator said it proceeded from the praise of the “flaming ones” themselves.<sup>38</sup> Whether it is from their praise one cannot be dogmatic, but it seems reasonable, in any case, to say the flaming ones (*seraphim*) are its source.

6:5<sup>39</sup>

**So I said: ‘Woe is me** This display of fiery beings surrounding *adonai* on His throne awash with the smoke from the altar—all within the Heavenly temple which shook at the sound of antiphonal praise drove Isaiah to do something he had not done: The word **woe** is that which exclaims great distress and appears when he pronounced **woe** on Jerusalem (Isaiah 3:9) and then on the wicked (Isaiah 3:11). Here, however, the display in this “house” which has no other description than “holy” drives him to acknowledge that he also is in distress crying “woe is me!” Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the fourth and final time this word is used he is still including himself in with those who are in distress (Isaiah 24:16).<sup>40</sup> It may be said, then, that this meeting with God changed his perspective of everything: God (*adonai*), the people, the political situation, and himself. This was a devastating experience for this Isaiah: He found God’s holiness—found in His presence—to be threatening.<sup>41</sup> When it is said that seeing God changed his perspective of “himself,” what is meant is that his perspective of his sin became sharpened and his iniquity—no matter how trivial—was enormous in relation to “the Holy.”<sup>42</sup> Even with the confessed wickedness of those who know better, the reader will find Mercy in the end of this verse.

**for I am undone!** That is, he is brought to silence. This is the rendering the only other time this word is found in the book of Isaiah.<sup>43</sup> It is probable that Isaiah felt he was going to die

**25. NICAEA 11 12 12 10.**  
Reginald Heber, 1827 John Bacchus Dykes, 1861

**Opentug**

<sup>38</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 195.

<sup>39</sup> See under 6:1 also.

<sup>40</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for 'owy (*Strong's 188*)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012.

7 Feb 2012. < [http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strong's=H188&t=KJV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H188&t=KJV) >

<sup>41</sup> Boice, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Davidson, 229.

<sup>43</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *damah* (*Strong's 1820*)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 7 Feb 2012. < [http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strong's=H1820&t=KJV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H1820&t=KJV) >

standing in the presence of God.<sup>44</sup> The reader is left with two possibilities here: 1. Isaiah is astonished, distressed, or fearful because of this meeting in the heavenly temple and his consequential inability to gain his composure to speak much else coherently; 2. Isaiah is astonished, distressed, or fearful because of this meeting in the heavenly temple and his consequential inability to fulfill his calling to prophesy to the nation. Contextually, his fresh view of himself as “unholy” combined with his perpetual calling to “show the house of Israel their sin” (Isaiah 58:1) should lead the reader to the second option. That is to say, Isaiah was called to reveal the sin of the people, yet he stood speechless (“**undone**”) because of his own self condemnation in the face of God. Or better said, Isaiah felt his calling would go unfulfilled because he was about to die. This will be remedied when God pronounces him “clean” in coming verses. Incidentally, his recognition of God’s holiness and his confession of uncleanness define “holiness” for the reader as that which is “clean.”

**Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.”** Isaiah is struck silent because of this meeting with the Lord,<sup>45</sup> the King of the earth in light of his recently passing king.<sup>46</sup> He gives the reason for his being “undone.” He has seen the “LORD.” This is not *adonai* of 6:1. This is *Yehovah*, the “Existing One,”<sup>47</sup> of 6:3. This is both Isaiah’s Sovereign and his Creator. This display of splendor rendered him helpless and distressed. As if this is not enough, the real “King”—the one who far supersedes Uzziah is this Sovereign Creator.

Did Isaiah see Jehovah? While some settle for believing that Isaiah saw only a throne and a robe,<sup>48</sup> Barnes, in light of John 1:18 and 1 Timothy 6:16, believes Isaiah saw “only the symbol of His presence.”<sup>49</sup> Certainly, one would wonder why there is no hint of such an interpretation in the context. While Scripture can certainly interpret Scripture,<sup>50</sup> context—especially a context of 66 chapters—would be expected to clarify this conundrum if it were merely a “symbol.” No explanation at all would lead one to believe it required no “symbol” interpretation as is often evident in the prophetic writings because it was not a symbol.<sup>51</sup> Isaiah, in light of John 10:21,

---

<sup>44</sup>Calvin, 207.

<sup>45</sup>Barnes reminds readers on page 140 that this is reminiscent of Luke 5:8 when Peter saw himself in the presence of this same God on a boat while catching a multitude of fishes.

<sup>46</sup> John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*. The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 126; “So why is it significant that Isaiah’s call occurs in the year King Uzziah dies? I believe it is because with Uzziah’s death that Judah’s truly hopeless situation emerges. The date is approximately 740 B.C. By this time the Assyrian emperor Tiglath-Pileser III has clearly established himself as a military conqueror to be feared. But it seems likely that for Judah as long as the powerful Uzziah was on the throne, the immediacy of the threat was blurred. But when Uzziah was removed from the scene, the danger could no longer be ignored... What could possibly be done?”

<sup>47</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *Yehovah* (*Strong's 3068*)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 7 Feb 2012. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=H3068&cscs=Isa&page=2>>

<sup>48</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 196; They hold to this despite the twice-clear statement of “I saw the Lord” (6:1) and “Mine eyes have seen the LORD” (6:5).

<sup>49</sup>Barnes, 141.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:13.

<sup>51</sup> Revelation 1:20, for example.

was seeing a pre-incarnate “image of the invisible God”<sup>52</sup>—especially since this “LORD” (6:3, 5) and “Lord” (6:1) was identified by John the Apostle to be Jesus the Christ.<sup>53</sup>

Isaiah could not join the seraphs in praising God until his lips were purified. He cried out, “woe is me” ( *’ōy lî*) because he was in the presence of a holy God.<sup>54</sup>

Psalms 15 provides a detailed list of prerequisites before a person can enter God’s presence to worship. Among those requirements is that one must “speak the truth from his heart” (Ps 15:2).<sup>55</sup>

The shocking, life changing aspect of this vision was that Isaiah himself experienced a vivid and powerful personal meeting with God that allowed him to have a firsthand glimpse of the supernatural realm. Cultural imagery and religious platitudes about God were suddenly overpowered by the reality of the overwhelming experience of his awesome presence.<sup>56</sup>

### 6:6-7<sup>57</sup>

**Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it,** One of the “flaming ones” flew over to Isaiah with a coal<sup>58</sup> from either the altar of burnt offering that never is without a flame (Leviticus 6:12) or this is the altar of incense in which there was continual burning as well (Exodus 30:7-8).<sup>59</sup> The reader can be assured it is but one of these altars as the heavenly temple was the prototype of Moses’ tabernacle (Hebrews 8:5). The text is clear that the angel touched the prophet’s mouth, but this was a very “slight, momentary touch, sufficient merely to be a sign or token that he was cleansed.”<sup>60</sup> Fire is often used to denote purging in Scripture (Job 23:12; Psalm 12:6-7), and purgation of conscience appears to be the need of this prophet. The need of purgation was not the driving force behind this atonement. Isaiah did nothing for this atonement.<sup>61</sup> This was an act of mercy. Obedience to the call that is about to take place is chronologically after this act of mercy so this cannot be the compeller of such an act from God.

---

<sup>52</sup>Colossians 1:15.

<sup>53</sup> John 12:41.

<sup>54</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 191.

<sup>55</sup>Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 192.

<sup>56</sup>Smith, *Isaiah 1–39* The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 192.

<sup>57</sup>See also under 6:4.

<sup>58</sup> Barnes, 141; Barnes thinks this could be a hot stone as in 1 Kings 19:6. The fact that these are two different words makes this nonetheless doubtful.

<sup>59</sup>John A. Martin, “Isaiah.” in Old Testament-The Bible Knowledge Commentary in the Bible Knowledge Series, Eds. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 2004), 1045.

<sup>60</sup>Barnes, 141.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, 192.



**And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.’** John 12:40-41 shows us that Isaiah saw Christ on this throne and so it is Jesus Christ in the Old Testament **purging** sins. See God in His holiness; see myself in my sinfulness; I can look at Christ and find forgiveness.

So one of the “flaming ones” takes a coal from the altar and touches the prophet as a sign of his purging, and then follows this sign up with a statement confirming that Isaiah had received purging from his sin. Consequently, here the reader is acquainted with a fuller understanding of “holy” by simple process of elimination. If Isaiah felt unclean and confessed himself thusly; and if he was pronounced as “purged” of his sin, then it stands to reason that the holiness of God can be defined as that which separate from “uncleanness” and “sin.” What then is this uncleanness and sinfulness? “Uncleanness” is seen as that which is like a rag of “filth” (Isaiah 64:6) and is furthermore contrasted with holiness in the pinnacle prophecy of the kingdom of Heaven (Isaiah 35:8). “Sin,” first of all is in parallel with “iniquity” in this verse as it is in Isaiah 59:2 and is said to separate people from God. Furthermore, “sin” is seen as a trespass of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Whether, Isaiah was any more “sinful” than his peers is doubtful. What is sure, however, is that he was as sinful as the people to whom he was called to minister (Isaiah 58:1) from the perspective of One Who is thrice-“Holy.” Did Isaiah need this purging? It is supposed by one commentator that his conscience (which in his mind put him on the same level as obstinate Israel) was causing him to be ineffective—necessarily or not—and that this “touch of purgation” was essential emblem usage for further effectiveness.<sup>62</sup> Now, a “Holy” *Yehovah-Adonai* has a “holy” minister through this “symbolic action of removal of the prophet’s guilt and sin. Of course this is what the entire nation needed.”<sup>63</sup>

## **6:8**

**Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’**

In addition, then, to the voice of the seraphim (verse 6), Isaiah hears the voice of *Adonai*, and He asks a question. Who makes up the “us” of this verse? There appears to be at least three possibilities here: 1. *Adonai* is rhetorically asking for a representative for Isaiah and Himself; 2. *Adonai* is rhetorically asking for a representative for all within the Godhead;<sup>64,65</sup> 3. *Adonai* is asking for a representative for the seraphim and Himself in a seemingly prodding manner. It is this third possibility of which some subscribe.<sup>66</sup> This brings a certainty that the whole of the heavenly realm had interest in the purification of both the prophet Isaiah and the nation of Judah.

The next objective is to find out the object of this “sending.” What needs to be done that *Adonai* could not do for Himself? Perhaps this is the wrong question. What is clear is that Isaiah had a vision which presumably occurred in the final days of Uzziah’s reign (Isaiah 1:1). He had what could be supposed to be another vision in 2:1 in which he received another body of truth from the Lord through chapter 5 up to the death of Uzziah in 6:1. In other words, there does not appear to be a “calling” or “commission” in these first five chapters. It is clear, however, that he

---

<sup>62</sup>Barnes, 141-142.

<sup>63</sup> Martin, 1045.

<sup>64</sup> Much like Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and 11:7.

<sup>65</sup> Martin, 1045.

<sup>66</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 198.

receives a commission in this chapter and it is for that reason that so many feel this (6:8) to be his prophetic commencement.<sup>67</sup> It is, furthermore, clear that this “calling”/“sending” was the occasion of the vision of *Yehovah-Adonai* in the first place.<sup>68</sup>

**“Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”**

Isaiah stepped forward as if he were one among many for the assignment. Had he not received confirmation of his “purged iniquity,” he would not have been eager to accept the call.

**6:9-10<sup>69</sup>**

**“And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.’”**

There is no need to run to Matthew 13, John 12, Acts 28, or Romans 11:8 to make sense of this passage. For it speaks to the original reader, and determining that original perspective is the objective. This is not some arbitrary hardening to the truth. Rather, this is a hardening of the already hardening heart (see verse 9). The sense that they were hardened and therefore constrained to “keep on being hardened” (expanded in verse 10 to all the senses) is given by the NKJV,<sup>70</sup> the ESV,<sup>71</sup> the NIV,<sup>72</sup> and the NASB.<sup>73</sup> The KJV, on the other hand, leaves room for a people who were neutral and uninvolved with the things of God—relatively innocent in their heart, their ears, and their eyes (verse 10).<sup>74</sup> However, Oswalt points to chapters 2 and 4 make it clear that these upon which Isaiah focused had previously denied the instruction of God. He furthermore says “Isaiah is called upon to preach a message that, given the already-hardened hearts of his generation and several of the following, will only push them farther away from God.”<sup>75</sup> These are not innocent people whom God somehow predestines to destruction without input of the freewill of the people.

These were already “obstinately bent on iniquity” that they resultantly would reject Isaiah’s message. Sooner or later, “it is well that the heart should be known, and the true effect should be seen.”<sup>76</sup> Those of Isaiah’s audience were not recipients of his ministry for the end-state of their conversion, but rather for a witness to their destruction<sup>77</sup>--a destruction Keil and Delitzsch say includes a heart “without feeling for the operations of divine grace,” ears that are “fat,” and eyes

---

<sup>67</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, 199.

<sup>68</sup> Calvin, 212.

<sup>69</sup> See also under 6:1.

<sup>70</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "The Major Prophet Isaiah 6 - (NKJV - New King James Version)." Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 15 Feb 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Isa&c=6&t=NKJV> >

<sup>71</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "The Major Prophet Isaiah 6 - (ESV - English Standard Version)." Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 15 Feb 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Isa&c=6&t=ESV> >

<sup>72</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "The Major Prophet Isaiah 6 - (NIV - New International Version)." Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 15 Feb 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Isa&c=6&t=NIV> >

<sup>73</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "The Major Prophet Isaiah 6 - (NASB - New American Standard Bible)." Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 15 Feb 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Isa&c=6&t=NASB> >

<sup>74</sup> Martin, 1046; also repeated in reverse order in the same verse forming a “chiasm.”

<sup>75</sup> Oswalt, 2003, 127-128.

<sup>76</sup> Barnes, 144.

<sup>77</sup> Calvin, 219.

that pare “pasted over and firmly closed by ...substance secreted in the night.”<sup>78</sup> Now, observe how the right preparation brings endurance.

“Isaiah, go to the world with my message and just know ahead of time—nobody will hear you.”

## 6:11-12

**“Then I sad, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered: ‘Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, The LORD has removed men far way, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land...”**

The now-cleansed prophet—having been commissioned from the LORD to represent Him to His people—asked how long this duty would be his. Who can blame him for this question? He has already been promised a negative outcome. People would not repent by and large. They would not see the error of their “hardening.” Rather, they would be harder still. The “Lord” (who is also the “LORD”) replied that this ministry would continue until the land was virtually empty. That which was full of activity and life would become dead.<sup>79</sup> This makes reference to the impending Babylonian captivity—of which Isaiah did not see prior to his death.<sup>80</sup> The captivity and the desolation of the land is God’s doing—the blame and credit is His. An enduring work will show God’s faithfulness in a remnant as will be seen in verse 13.

## 6:13<sup>81</sup>

**“But yet a tenth will be in it, And will return and be for consuming. As a terebinth tree or as an oak, Whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy see shall be its stump.”**

In God’s mercy, there would be a remnant in the land that would “return.” The “tenth” will “return.” This could appear to be in contrast to the people who would not “convert” in verse 10—as it is the same Hebrew word.<sup>82</sup> However, the closest context would indicate a contrast with those who will “be removed” (6:12). These “returning” would not be spared as one might think, but rather they will apparently perish as a tree does when it falls. This “fallen tree” will appear dead. However, they will somehow live through the “holy seed” which lies potentially in the “stump.” The NKJV reading is much preferred to the KJV reading which includes “falling leaves” is not found in the Hebrew.<sup>83</sup> 2 Kings 24:14 speaks of a remnant left in the land by Nebuchadnezzar---the poorer of the land<sup>84</sup> while Jeremiah 40 and 42 speak of a group of escapees which will return from the lands of Egypt, Ammon, Edom and Moab.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, 200.

<sup>79</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, 202.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, 1046.

<sup>81</sup> See also under 6:4.

<sup>82</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *shuwb* (*Strong's 7725*)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 18 Feb 2012. <[http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H7725&t=KJV&cscs=Isa](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H7725&t=KJV&cscs=Isa)>

<sup>83</sup> Barnes, 146.

<sup>84</sup> Barnes, 145.

<sup>85</sup> Barnes, 145.

