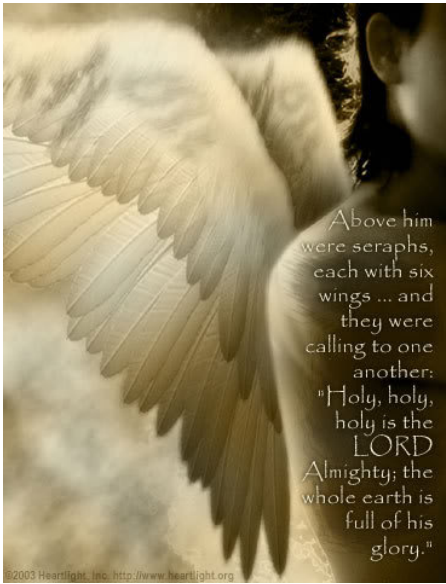


### 3g - Holy, Holy, Holy

#### Read Isaiah 6



Going to God in time of crisis is a natural response. Isaiah went to the temple to pray when his nation was in grave trouble. Uzziah, Judah's strong king for half a century, was dying. Assyria, the evil empire to the East, was restless and threatening. However, when Isaiah prayed for the people, he didn't get the answer he expected. He received a vision of the holy God that shook him to the core of his being.

1. Many people imagine that God is like a kindly old grandfather in the sky. How do you think he got that reputation?

2. After reading Isaiah 6 describe in your own words what Isaiah saw and heard in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-4).

**Isaiah 6:1-4 HCSB** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and His robe filled the temple. (2) Seraphim were standing above Him; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (3) And one called to another: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; His glory fills the whole earth. (4) The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke.

**In the year that King Uzziah died.** King Uzziah was a leper and was therefore forced to cease functioning as king c.754-758 BC.<sup>1</sup>

**I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne.** Isaiah is outside the Temple. The doors open and the veil separating the principle chamber from the Holy of Holies is pulled back, revealing Adonai Melek as King.

Traditionally, the claim to have seen the Lord God was the pretext Manasseh used to execute Isaiah. In order to make this as painful as possible Manasseh ordered that Isaiah be sawn in two with a wooden saw.<sup>2</sup>

- **3Martyrdom of Isaiah 3:5** And the servants of Hezekiah accused him, and he made his escape to the region of Bethlehem. **6** And Belchira accused Isaiah and the prophets who were with him, saying: 'Isaiah and those who are with him prophesy against Jerusalem and against the cities of Judah that they shall be laid waste



<sup>1</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:19-21

<sup>2</sup> The Martyrdom of Isaiah is the first part (chapters 1-5) of the pseudepigraphical 2<sup>nd</sup> century book called The Ascension of Isaiah. The same claim is made in the 6<sup>th</sup> century book titled Lives of the Prophets.

<sup>3</sup> The Martyrdom of Isaiah from a medieval illuminated manuscript

and (against the children of Judah and) Benjamin also that they shall go into captivity, and also against thee, O lord the king, that thou shalt go (bound) with hooks 8 and iron chains': But they prophesy falsely against Israel and Judah. And Isaiah himself hath 9 said: 'I see more than Moses the prophet.' But Moses said: 'No man can see God and live': 10 and Isaiah hath said: 'I have seen God and behold I live.'

- **Martyrdom of Isaiah 4:12b** he sent and seized Isaiah. 5:1b, 2 And he sawed him asunder with a wood-saw. And when Isaiah was being sawn in sunder Balchira stood up, accusing him, and all the false prophets stood up, laughing and rejoicing because 3 of Isaiah.
- **Martyrdom of Isaiah 5:14** And when Isaiah was being sawn in sunder, he neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spake with the Holy Spirit until he was sawn in twain.
- **Hebrews 11:37 HCSB** They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated.

We Adonaists believe that the person Isaiah saw was a theophany, the incarnate Son of God, for no one has seen the Father at any time<sup>4</sup> and the Spirit is...well...spirit, without flesh and bone!

**His robe filled the Temple.** A flowing train was a traditional symbol of monarchy in the Middle East. Servants ministered to the King, eliminating the need for movement.

**Seraphim.** The singular would be one seraph These were not the winged creatures we are used to seeing in human art. The Hebrew term *saraph* is used of the biting snakes in Numbers 21:6. It literally means to burn and is understood in that particular context to imply the burning pain inflicted by the serpents. In this context it can indicate either the burning zeal or the brightness of the seraphim (2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; Ezekiel 1:13; Matthew 28:3). It would seem only right that a God describe as a “consuming fire”<sup>5</sup> would be attended by such fiery beings.

Interestingly, one of the very first seraphim of light was Lucifer, and he also appeared in the guise of a beautiful and wise serpent-like creature in Gan Eden. Further, in Egyptian mythology the head of a serpent represented wisdom.

**Were standing above Him.** The entire angelic host gathers about Yahweh’s throne, to the left and to the right.<sup>6</sup> The positioning of the Seraphim above the throne would seem to imply some form of authority or privilege. Perhaps they serve as something like ministers of state.

**Each one had six wings.**<sup>7</sup> Cherubim apparently have four faces and wings.

- **Ezekiel 1:6 HCSB** but each of them had four faces and four wings.

In contrast, seraphim have six wings. Two were ready for mobility, two for veiling their faces and two for veiling their lower bodies.

**His glory fills the whole earth.** Jesus confirmed Isaiah’ vision when He said,

- **John 12:41 HCSB** Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke about Him.



<sup>4</sup> John 1:18

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; 2 Samuel 22:9; Psalm 18:8; Isaiah 29:6; 30:27, 30; 33:14; Hebrews 12:29

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 22:19

<sup>7</sup> Depiction of a seraph in the mosaic tiles of the ceiling of a 13<sup>th</sup> century cathedral.

The phrase can be put another way in Hebrew as “The fullness of the whole earth is His glory.” In that sense it matches Psalm 24:1 that says that “the earth and everything in it, the whole world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord.” Small wonder that when He returns He will “destroy those who destroy the earth.”<sup>8</sup>

**The temple was filled with smoke.** Perhaps this was the Shekina glory, the visual signal of the presence of the Ruach’ ha Kodesh?<sup>9</sup>

- **Psalms 97:2-3 HCSB** Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. (3) Fire goes before Him and burns up His foes on every side.

What do we learn about God from this vision?

We see:

1. The majesty of God
  - a. His supremacy and dignity – He is seated while all others are standing and worshipping.
  - b. His ease and perfect security – He is firmly seated on the throne. He is clearly in charge and without challengers.
2. The ineffable and incomprehensible nature of God
3. The adorable and awful holiness of God

**3. What does it mean that God is holy (Isaiah 6:3)?**

Kadosh (Strong’s 6918) means set apart, sanctified, different from the common, holy, sinless by nature. True holiness inevitably carries over into personal conduct. Thus God is described as not even tempted by evil (James 1:13), and as the Father of lights in whom there is no variation or shadow (v.17). It is used to describe Christ’s sinlessness (Romans 1:4). Jesus said “there is only One who is good.” (Matthew 19:17). That would include angels (Job 4:18; Galatians 1:8). Holiness can be imputed however. For instance, holy places would include the tabernacle and temple (Leviticus 6:16; 7:6; Psalm 46:4; 65:4; Ecclesiastes 8:10; Ezekiel 42:13). Objects and sacrifices can be made holy (Leviticus 21:6, 8; Numbers 5:17). Fortunately Yahweh M’Kadesh (God Who Makes Holy; Exodus 31:13; Leviticus 20:8; Ezekiel 37:28) is willing to impute holiness to those who will submit to His Son’s Kingship.

**4. What effect does this vision have on Isaiah, and why (Isaiah 6:5)?**

**Isaiah 6:5 HCSB** Then I said: Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, *and* because my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts.

**Woe is me.** “Before honor is humility.” Conversely, “Humility leads to exaltation.” The sight of the Lord’s glory brought intense, painful self-realization to Isaiah. The dazzling light of the Lord’s presence only underscored the darkness of the prophet’s heart.

There was dismay. “Woe is me, for I am ruined.”

There was self-loathing. “I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips.”

**My eyes have seen the King.** Compare Isaiah’s experience to Job’s.

- **Job 42:5-6 HCSB** I had heard rumors about You, but now my eyes have seen You. (6) Therefore I take back *my words* and repent in dust and ashes.

The Apostle Peter had the same reaction:

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<sup>8</sup> Revelation 11:18

<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings 8:10; Ezekiel 10:4

- **Luke 5:8 HCSB** When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"

In view of these biblical experiences I think it should be safe to say that anyone who has truly encountered holy God will readily drop to their knees in humble, contrite consternation, beat their chest and cry for mercy.

- **Luke 18:13-14 HCSB** "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me-- a sinner!' (14) I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

5. The seraph ("burning one") touches Isaiah's lips with a live coal. How does this action relate both to Isaiah's vision and to his future ministry (Isaiah 6:6-7)?

Absolution is integrally connected with confession (1 John 1:9). I'd like to compare this encounter with the experience of salvation by pointing out three things:

- a. The cleansing worked.
- b. The cleansing required a sacrifice.
- c. The removal of sin was immediate.

The mouth of the prophet was touched because it was the part to be used by the prophet. In other words the sanctification will always be in regards to our means of ministry. Thus,

- **1 Peter 4:10-11 HCSB** Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. (11) If anyone speaks, *his speech should be* like the oracles of God; if anyone serves, *his service should be* from the strength God provides, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

6. In what ways has the Lord purified and prepared you for ministry?

7. Why do you think the Lord asks for volunteers in Isaiah 6:8?

In 1 Chronicles 29:5 we read "Now who will volunteer to consecrate himself to the Lord today?" God's will is never forced upon us. He graciously allows each of us to refuse Him. Having said that, His will is good, pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2). Every time we have rejected His will and substituted our own in its stead we have found nothing but pain, misery and death at the end of the path.

The task to which Isaiah was being called was not an easy one. His resulting martyrdom would prove to be one of the most horrifying examples of human depravity and cruelty. However, when all is said and done, Isaiah will have all of blissful eternity in the presence of his King to forget his pains. On the other hand, sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death (James 1:15).

8. Isaiah's ministry is to make people spiritually blind and deaf (Isaiah 6:9-10). Why would God give him such a strange task?

**Isaiah 6:9-10 HCSB** And He replied: Go! Say to these people: Keep listening, but do not understand; keep looking, but do not perceive. (10) Dull the minds of these people; deafen their ears and blind their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their minds, turn back, and be healed.

We must preach the gospel regardless of anything other than the fact that Adonai Melek has commanded it. We are not to modify the message in order to make it more palatable to our hearers. We must proclaim the message; persisting in it whether convenient or not, “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). We must not stop delivering the message, even when we can actually see the intended audience hardening themselves against it.

Some of us will be “witness to” and some of us will unfortunately “witnesses against”. Some will choose to use the gift of free-will to refuse the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the General Revelation available through nature and the internal moral code, the Special Revelation of the Holy Scriptures and finally the testimony of the Ransomed.

Those who want to do the will of the Lord will understand the teaching and identify its divine source (John 7:17). Those who are blind in spite of their eyes and deaf in spite of having ears (Isaiah 43:7) will receive what they want – a life without the God of Light and Life. They will experience eternal damnation in the “outer darkness”.

This is a terrifying thought but it can bring some sense of comfort to the faithful witness. Like Isaiah we may ask “what more could I have done?” (Isaiah 5:4) but it is not up to us to “convert” or “proselytize”. We merely bring the message and strive to live it in our lives. The decision to accept or refuse lays completely in the minds and hearts of our audience. Even Hashem Himself will not overcome them. Who are we to think we can strong-arm a soul into heaven?

**9.** Spiritually speaking, what leads people's senses to become dulled and their hearts to become calloused?

The Law of Light. God offers each of us a certain amount of light or enlightenment. When we obey it we get more. When we refuse it, we not only do not receive any more – we actually lose some of our ability to perceive more and our minds become “darkened.”<sup>10</sup>

**10.** How does Isaiah 6:11-13 emphasize a terrible aspect of God's holiness for those who reject him?

**Isaiah 6:11-13 HCSB** Then I said, "Until when, Lord?" And He replied: Until cities lie in ruins without inhabitants, houses are without people, the land is ruined and desolate, (12) and the LORD drives the people far away, leaving great emptiness in the land. (13) Though a tenth will remain in the land, it will be burned again. Like the terebinth or the oak, which leaves a stump when felled, the holy seed is the stump.

This passage reminds me of Moses' Deuteronomic curse:

- **Deuteronomy 28:15-29 HCSB (15)** "But if you do not obey the LORD your God by carefully following all His commands and statutes I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overtake you: (16) You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. (17) Your basket and kneading bowl will be cursed. (18) Your descendants will be cursed, and your soil's produce, the young of your herds, and the newborn of your flocks. (19) You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. (20) The LORD will send against you curses, confusion, and rebuke in everything you do until you are destroyed and quickly perish, because of the wickedness of your actions in abandoning Me. (21) The LORD will make pestilence cling to you until He has exterminated you from the land you are entering to possess. (22) The LORD will afflict you with wasting disease, fever, inflammation, burning heat,

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<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 1:25-28; 6:23; 13:9; 18:1; 29:13, 18; Isaiah 66:3b-4; Matthew 25:28-30; Luke 8:16; 12:47-48; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

drought, blight, and mildew; these will pursue you until you perish. (23) The sky above you will be bronze, and the earth beneath you iron. (24) The LORD will turn the rain of your land into falling dust; it will descend on you from the sky until you are destroyed. (25) The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will march out against them from one direction but flee from them in seven directions. You will be an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. (26) Your corpses will be food for all the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the land, and no one will scare them away. (27) "The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, tumors, a festering rash, and scabies, from which you cannot be cured. (28) The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness, and mental confusion, (29) so that at noon you will grope as a blind man gropes in the dark. You will not be successful in anything you do. You will only be oppressed and robbed continually, and no one will help *you*.

It further brings to mind the warning of the Holy Spirit in:

- **Proverbs 1:24-31 HCSB** Since I called out and you refused, extended my hand and no one paid attention, (25) since you neglected all my counsel and did not accept my correction, (26) I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, (27) when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and stress overcome you. (28) Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will search for me, but won't find me. (29) Because they hated knowledge, didn't choose to fear the LORD, (30) were not interested in my counsel, and rejected all my correction, (31) they will eat the fruit of their way and be gluttoned with their own schemes.

**11.** How does this passage shatter many of our preconceived notions of what God is like?

**12.** Give one example of how God's holiness should affect your life or ministry.