

• A second major section begins – following on from his general survey

We now reach a second major section in the book of Isaiah, chapters 6-12. In the first five chapters of the book, Isaiah has given us a general survey of the spiritual condition of Israel during his lifetime. So far Isaiah has scarcely mentioned any particular people or places or times. He mentioned a few kings in the title of the book¹. He said that he was writing about 'Judah and Jerusalem' and there were brief mentions of 'foreigners' and 'all nations' but there has been nothing very specific. Now all of that will change. Isaiah gets down to fuller detail.

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

• Now detail – 740 BC

Now we have mention of a specific year (we would call it 740 BC), and a specific king, and something that happened to Isaiah himself. The section unfolds as follows:

II. The Folly of Sin; the Hope of a Saviour¹

A. A prophet saved and sent²

B. **Judah** in need of salvation³.

Judah refuses faith⁴ and comes under God's judgement⁵.

But the remnant continues⁶ and there is hope for the future⁷.

B. **Israel** in need of salvation¹.

Israel refuses faith² and comes under God's judgement³.

But the remnant continues⁴ and there is hope for the future⁵.

A. A people saved and singing⁶

• Can anything be done about Israel's wickedness?

The question is: is there anything that can be done about the awful wickedness of Israel? Isaiah has surveyed the condition of Israel as he experienced it during the second half of the eighth century BC. There have been a few hints that God will do something about it¹. But we would like to know more. What actually was happening in this time of Israel's story, and what exactly is the nature of this price-paying redemption that is coming? Isaiah's way of answering these questions is first to tell us how he himself experienced reconciliation with God² and what it was in Judah and Israel that so desperately highlighted the need of salvation³. Then he will present us with a picture of an entire community⁴ that has entered into salvation in the same way that Isaiah did as an individual. In the entire section there is an A-B-B-A kind of structure.

• Isaiah tells us of his reconciliation with God

• He shows us a community that has salvation

• Salvation will be achieved by a Saviour

He sees a vision of God

• Alive

In passing statements in chapters 1-5 we were able to see a coming redemption, which will bring into being a new Jerusalem. Now we shall see that this salvation is achieved by a Saviour: a King in the line of David who will be born of a virgin. Isaiah begins with his own story.

He sees a vision of God. God is **alive**. A king has just died but God is the living God and well able to reveal himself to Isaiah. God is a **King**. One king is dead, but there is an altogether greater King. God is **holy**. In the vision God is seen in the temple of Jerusalem, a symbolic building whose very architecture proclaims the holiness of God. The angels are worshipping this holy God of Israel.

1:1

6:1-12:6

6:1-13

7:1-9:8

7:1-17

7:18-8:8

8:9-22

9:1-7

9:8-11:6

9:8-10:4

10:5-15

10:16-34

11:1-16

12:1-6

notably in 1:27

6:7

7:1-9:7; 9:8-

11:16

12:1-6

- Holy

- Covered faces – God's majesty

- Covered feet – not willing to go on own initiative

- Flying – ready to do God's will

- Glory is the radiation of holiness

Next we must note what takes place as Isaiah reacts to the vision of glory

- A small earthquake – the greatness of God

- Smoke – vision did not last long

- Conviction of his sin

- Our talk is the greatest indication of wickedness

What God did

- Once aware of our sins we are ready to be forgiven

- Forgiveness of sins is only given because of a sacrifice –

²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'

They cover their faces because God's presence is majestic. They cover their feet because they are not willing to go anywhere at their own initiative. They are flying because they are ready to do God's will. And they are worshipping God. Angels are famous for humility, for obedience and for their worship. They are adoring God because he is pre-eminently holy. God's holiness is everything about him that makes him God: his hatred of sin, his positive purity, his desire to have everything made good and right. The outshining of God's holiness is his glory. Glory is the radiation of his holiness. The entire universe bears the marks of the Creator. The earth makes visible (for those who have eyes to see) the character of the holy God.

Next we must note what takes place as Isaiah reacts to the vision of glory. He is not allowed to see the glory of God for very long. We read:

⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

A small earthquake took place as Isaiah saw the vision. It was a sign of the greatness of God and his ability to shake any part of this world. The temple was filled with smoke. This means that whatever Isaiah saw, it did not last very long. He was not allowed to gaze at the glory of God.

It brought conviction of sin in his life. Most of us have a very casual idea of what God is like. Once we see God's holiness it immediately makes us ashamed of ourselves.

Especially Isaiah was convinced that he had been guilty of sins of the tongue.

⁵'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Almighty.'

When Isaiah saw the glory of God it made him know that he was sinful, and that everyone else was in the same position. Our talk is the greatest indication of our wickedness. Our anger, our expressions of prejudice, our deceit, our irreverence – all these show themselves by the way we talk. Even our silence may be a sign of our cowardice or fearfulness. We are not controlling the tongue just because we are able to remain silent!

What God did. One of the angels – sent by God himself – does something about Isaiah's distress. When we are aware of our sins we are ready to be forgiven.

⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

The altar was the place where sacrifices for sin were offered. Forgiveness does not come by our good works. We are not saved by our repentance. Forgiveness only comes to us because a sacrifice for sins has been made. In New Testament language: forgiveness only comes to us because Jesus sacrificed himself for us upon the cross.

⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

of a sacrifice –
Jesus

• *Burning coal
extinguishes sin*

Forgiveness came to Isaiah in relation to the very thing about which he felt so alarmed. The burning coal extinguishes our sin altogether so that it no longer exists in our relationship to God, and so that our consciences may feel clean.



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