

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL PROPHETS AND KINGS GOD THE REVEALER

God Reveals Himself to Isaiah

As we continue our study of God the Revealer, we move to the prophet Isaiah – prophet to the Kingdom of Judah, His Old Testament book is sometimes considered the ‘fifth gospel’ because he so often points us forward to Jesus the Messiah – the One Anointed by God to deliver His people. Next week, we will study Isaiah’s prophesy of the Suffering Servant. Today, we turn to a very powerful scripture of God’s Word – the time when God revealed Himself directly to Isaiah who lived approximately 800 years before the birth of Christ.

In 1947, about seven miles south of Jericho and one mile west of the Dead Sea, some wandering Arabs were searching for a lost goat and came upon a partially collapsed cave. This cave contained crushed jars with scrolls protruding from them. One of these scrolls was identified as the book of Isaiah - written 2,000 years ago - 1000 years older than any Hebrew Old Testament book in existence. Essentially, it is the same book of Isaiah in our Bible today.

It was a time of change in Isaiah’s life and it was also a time of change for the Kingdom of Judah since their king, Uzziah, had just died. Uzziah who was also known as Azariah began his reign at age 16. Uzziah though young began well. His reign was blessed with strength and fame. But sadly, that strength and fame ‘went to his head.’ **2 Chronicles 26:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.* When Uzziah did this, the LORD immediately struck him with leprosy and he had to live in a separate house until the day he died while his son Jotham ran the kingdom. Carter Conlon, pastor of Times Square Church, says of Uzziah, “His death was an ominous warning to the nation that greatness without godliness opens the gateway to a sorrowful and tragic finish.” **Proverbs 16:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* The people of Judah were afraid. Their nation’s greatness and glory were gone leaving people fearful for their future. Conlon says, “It was the year that God responded with a final act of mercy to that generation, and He did so by drawing someone into His presence. That is what He always has done, and that is what He always will do!”

Along with Isaiah, we see the living God as holy and glorious.

Read Isaiah 6:1-4 (ESV) ¹ *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.* ² *Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* ³ *And one*

called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”
⁴ *And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.*

An earthly king had died but the Eternal King still lives! Isaiah was privileged to glimpse through a portal into the very Holy of Holies of heaven itself. Perhaps Isaiah witnessed the holiness of God in the temple where Uzziah failed to acknowledge God’s holiness. Isaiah was not a priest; therefore, he would not have physically entered the Holy of Holies – the place that Uzziah had so irreverently chosen to enter. In Solomon’s temple, the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies was viewed as God’s throne. The mercy seat was the cover (or lid) for the Ark of the Covenant, the place where the tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept. Statues of two cherubim facing each other were on top of the mercy seat. Cherubim were first mentioned in **Genesis 3:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.* However, cherubim were not what Isaiah saw that day. He saw seraphim – meaning burning ones and this is the only place in scripture that seraphim are mentioned. However, some commentators do think seraphim might be the same as the ‘living creatures’ mentioned in **Revelation 4**. The purpose of the seraphim was to magnify the Lord.

Two features of these heavenly creatures stand out – voice and wings. They were ready to praise the LORD and give Him their service. Isaiah recognized the seraphim as agents of God who would prepare him to proclaim the Lord’s message.

It has been said when the outlook is bleak try to look up. The nation was in a disturbing mess and Isaiah did exactly what each of us needs to do – look up and see the GLORY OF OUR GOD! And when Isaiah looked up and saw the glory of God, who did he see? He saw the Lord but let’s make sure we understand exactly who the Lord that Isaiah saw on the throne actually was.

We learned from Moses’ experience that no man can see the face of God and live. (**Exodus 33:20**) And yet, Isaiah said, *“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.”* Notice only the L of Lord is capitalized which is the translation of the Hebrew Adonai. It is not written that Isaiah saw the (all caps) LORD – translated YHWH. Jesus quoted the words of Isaiah and said in **John 12:41 (ESV)** ⁴¹ *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.* This confirms that Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus. Isaiah saw Christ’s glory and spoke of Him centuries before Jesus’ earthly birth, which is proof of the divinity of our Savior. Jesus said in **John 17:5 (ESV)** ⁵ *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

The seraphim called out to one another – *Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!* Notice that each seraph covered his face and feet with four out of six wings most likely symbolizing the awe and reverence of being in the immediate presence of God. The Hebrew word translated *holy* pictures sanctification or being set apart – righteousness. Holiness is an attribute that

humans do not share with God even though we are made in His image. Gotquestions.org comments, “The reverence shown to God by the angels should remind us of our own presumption when we rush thoughtlessly and irreverently into His presence, as we often do because we do not understand His holiness.” I think we may rush into Holy His Presence due in part to **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Because of the atoning work of Jesus, we can come into the holy presence of God through Jesus. However, as we come into His Presence we must remember that our feet are standing on holy ground and that no one can look into the face of God. We must reverently come to God through Jesus – the same Lord that Isaiah saw when he looked into heaven.

The LORD of Hosts is specifically defined as Yahweh Sabaoth (sabaoth meaning armies in our language). He is the God of Angel Armies!!! That is the profound difference between The LORD of Hosts and all His creatures. Isaiah’s vision of God’s holiness had a profound effect on Isaiah and it should have a profound effect on us as well.

We see ourselves as sinful and unworthy.

Read Isaiah 6:5 (ESV) ⁵ *And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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!”*

We see the proper response to God’s holiness in Isaiah’s response when he personally experienced the holiness of God – *Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips!* Isaiah’s vision of the holiness of God revealed his own **unholy** self. It is easy to remain self-righteous when we compare ourselves with others. However, when we come to recognize the holiness of God, everything changes. Isaiah would later write in **Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* Isaiah’s revelation of the holiness of God was not just a one-time emotional experience. Instead his revelation was a life changing occurrence.

We receive God’s grace and a mission.

Read Isaiah 6:6-8 (ESV) ⁶ *Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.* ⁷ *And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”* ⁸ *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”*

His cleansing was brought about by a fiery coal that the seraph pressed against his unclean lips. The coal touched to Isaiah’s lips brought about a cleansing in his life and ignited a Light that could not be extinguished – the Light of God. Throughout God’s Word, fire is a consistent element in the relationship of a Holy God with His people. God revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush. **Exodus**

3:5 (ESV)⁵ *Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”* The guidance of the pillar of fire by night led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. The last prophet of the Old Testament proclaimed in: **Malachi 3:2 (ESV)**² *But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.* In John’s revelation of Jesus Christ, he described the Son of Man in **Revelation 1:14 (ESV)**¹⁴ *The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire.* And, the final destination of all God’s enemies is the lake of fire – that will not consume but instead give eternal torment.

What did Isaiah mean by *unclean lips*. The Bible records many sins that involve unclean lips or speech. Some are slander, gossip, blasphemy, profanity, vulgarity, lying, cursing, and many other sins of speaking in unclean ways. Very likely these were not the specific sins of Isaiah that caused him to cry *woe is me*. Possibly Isaiah’s acknowledgement of his own unclean lips grew out of the personal contrast of seeing the fiery seraphim praising the Holy God. **Romans 10:10 (ESV)**¹⁰ *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* Isaiah knew that at his very best he failed miserably when compared to God in all His glory. He had known earthly kings but now he had seen a vision of King Jesus! **Psalms 24:10 (ESV)**¹⁰ *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!* When we do have a personal vision of the True and Living God, the right response – is the response that Isaiah made – determine to serve God!

Isaiah said: *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”* Who could the “us” to which the Lord is referring? The best answer is the Trinity meaning the Father – the Son and the Holy Spirit. Oswald Chambers writes, “God did not direct His call to Isaiah – Isaiah **overheard** God saying, “...*who will go for us?*” That is the heart of a true servant of God – one who goes not because of being commanded but goes out of heart for God’s calling.

I mentioned earlier that the seraphim had six wings – two they used to cover their face – two they used to cover their feet. The last two wings were used to move in loving service. It has pleased God to commit the declaration of His truth to men rather than to angels. After we come and see – we should desire to go and tell others that Jesus is the portal – the only Door into heaven.

I stand, I stand in awe of you.
Holy God, to whom all praise is due,
I stand in awe of you