

Unit I: Isaiah and the Renewal of the Temple

Here I Am! What Now?

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 2:1-5

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 6:1-13; 7:1-7; 20:1-6; 38:1-22

PRINT PASSAGES: Isaiah 6:1-8; 38:1-5

KEY VERSE

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6:8, KJV)

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I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Define the role of the prophet in ancient Israel.
- Express openness to God’s call to ministry.
- Discern God’s purposes for the community and align your lives with that purpose.

*Key Terms

Covered (6:2)—Hebrew: *kasab* (kaw-saw’): concealed; hid; clothed.

Dwell (6:5)—Hebrew: *yashab* (yaw-shab’): to sit, remain; inhabit; “live” (NIV).

Glory (6:3)—Hebrew: *kabowd* (kaw-bode’): honor; splendor; wealth.

Holy (6:3)—Hebrew: *qadosh* (kaw-doshe’): sacred; set apart.

Prayed (38:2)—Hebrew: *palal* (paw-lal’): intervened; interceded; judged.

Throne (6:1)—Hebrew: *kisse* or *kisseh* (kis-say’): a seat or chair of honor and authority.

Voice(s) (6:4)—Hebrew: *qol* (kole): sound(s); noise(s); in the context of divine communication, “qol” often signifies the voice of God, conveying authority, command, or revelation.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

The book of Isaiah spans a crucial period in Judah's history, around 740–680 BC, during the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Two key passages highlight Isaiah's prophetic ministry:

(1) According to Isaiah 6:1-8, God's call to Isaiah came "in the year that King Uzziah died" (about 740 BC). Uzziah's long reign brought prosperity but also pride, leading to his downfall and increased Assyrian threats. Isaiah received his transformative vision from God amid this national uncertainty.

(2) The events of Isaiah 38:1-5 occurred later during King Hezekiah's reign (around 701 BC), after Judah's miraculous deliverance from the Assyrians. Despite being faithful, Hezekiah faced a personal crisis that demonstrates the need for unwavering trust in God and reveals God's mercy.

These passages show different aspects of God's character—His holiness in chapter 6 and His mercy in chapter 38. Together they illustrate how God relates to His people with both majestic glory and intimate care.

Introduction

Isaiah's experience in God's presence resonates powerfully with believers walking through seasons of profound change and challenge. Like Isaiah, who received his vision "in the year that King Uzziah died," many in the black church have witnessed pivotal transitions—from the Civil Rights Movement to today's continuing struggle for justice. Black people understand what it means to seek God's face when trusted institutions and leaders are no longer present or when familiar supports seem to crumble.

The dual passages of Isaiah's throne room vision and Hezekiah's healing speak directly to the collective human experience. Like the prophet Isaiah, millions know what it means to encounter God's holiness in a personal or national crisis. God's call can embolden even His most timid servants with the courage to open their mouths and speak truth to power. And like Hezekiah, the faithful have learned to bring their burdens to God. Experience with God teaches that when human help fails, heaven's throne remains accessible.

The God who called Isaiah and saw Hezekiah's tears is the same God who sustained suffering people through the indignities of the Middle Passage and slavery. Only God can give strength to endure

Jim Crow and outlast urban renewal. He imparts grace for every struggle and stamina for every step of the way. Just as God purged Isaiah for prophecy and extended Hezekiah's life for purpose, He still equips those He has called to serve this generation.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Vision of Glory (*Isaiah 6:1-4*)

KJV

IN THE year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

NIV

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

2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

3 And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

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

The passage begins with a significant historical marker: “In the year that king Uzziah died.” Uzziah’s fifty-two-year reign brought prosperity and stability to Judah (verse 1). The king’s death marked a time of uncertainty for the nation. The seasons of life are marked with such unpredictable transitions—the loss of a job, a health crisis, or a sudden death in the family. It is during such moments that God often reveals Himself most powerfully. Following Uzziah’s death, Judah faced political instability. Isaiah’s vision shows the eternal King firmly in control, seated on a throne and filling the temple with His overwhelming presence and everlasting authority. The seraphim’s worship scene is rich with symbolism (verse 2). Their six wings speak to both reverence and readiness—covering their faces in humility, covering their feet in respect, and keeping two wings ready for immediate service. Their continuous cry of “Holy, holy, holy” isn’t mere repetition but the strongest possible emphasis in Hebrew, declaring God’s absolute distinctiveness and perfect purity (verse 3). The triple declaration of holiness might also foreshadow the triune nature of God. The seraphim’s worship perfectly balances reverence, service, awe, and action. Their example challenges our often-casual approach to worship and service. The physical shaking symbolizes God’s presence’s sheer power and impact (verse 4). Smoke often represents mystery and the divine, as when Moses encountered God on Mount Sinai.

?WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What circumstances in your life parallel the uncertainty of the period following Uzziah’s death? How has God revealed Himself in those moments?

The Response to Holiness (Isaiah 6:5-8)

KJV

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:
7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

NIV

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, the LORD Almighty.”
6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.
7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”
8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Isaiah’s reaction to God’s holiness is profound: “‘Woe to me!’ . . . ‘I am ruined!’” (verse 5, NIV). This wasn’t mere religious humility but an authentic response to encountering perfect holiness. In God’s presence, Isaiah saw himself with painful clarity. Like standing in bright sunlight that reveals every speck of dust on a window, God’s holiness exposed Isaiah’s sinfulness. Notably, Isaiah did not just acknowledge personal sin but identified with his people’s collective sinfulness: “I live among a people of unclean lips”(verse 5c, NIV). The seraph’s action with the burning coal symbolizes God’s initiative in purification and reminds all who will serve Him that God is the one who makes them worthy of God’s acceptance (verses 6-7). Once cleansed, Isaiah heard God’s call: “Whom shall I send?” (verse 8a). The sequence—encounter with holiness, recognition of sin, divine cleansing, and call to service—illustrates a spiritual transformation pattern leading to acceptable service. Isaiah’s response, “Here am I. Send me!” reflects the readiness that only emerges from an encounter with God. Ultimately, Isaiah’s vision emphasizes that true spiritual transformation begins with encountering God’s holiness.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How has your experience of God’s character and mercy shaped your willingness to serve?

The Response to Holiness (Isaiah 38:1-5)

KJV

IN THOSE DAYS was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,
3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.
4 Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,
5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

NIV

IN THOSE DAYS Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.”

2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,
3 “Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah:

5 “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.’”

Verse 1a begins with a significant statement: “In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death” (NIV). This illness occurred in a crucial period for Judah, shortly after their deliverance from Sennacherib’s Assyrian army (see Isaiah 37). After these victories, Isaiah delivered a prophetic word that the king’s health crisis was terminal, illustrating that neither position, privilege, nor public prowess can shield one from the trials of life. The prophet Isaiah delivered God’s message: “Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover” (verse 1c, NIV). This prompted Hezekiah to confront his faith and understanding of God, with “put your house in order” serving as a euphemism for preparing for death. Hezekiah’s response is telling: “Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD” (verse 2, NIV), symbolizing his deep focus on God. He actively requested a change in his fate, unlike many biblical figures. In verse 3a, he prayed, “Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully” (NIV). This emotionally charged plea, marked by “weeping bitterly,” highlights his vulnerability. Verses 4-5 illustrate how prayer can influence God’s actions and reveal the intricate relationship between divine decrees and human responsibility.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In what ways does Hezekiah’s story influence your understanding of prayer and God’s sovereignty?

A Closing Thought

This study of Isaiah presents two transformative encounters with God: Isaiah 6 features a throne-room vision that altered the prophet’s life, while Isaiah 38 depicts a king’s prayer that