

Isaiah – Chapter 6

Isaiah 6:1-4 – In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

REVIEW

Last week, we finished the indictment at the center of the lawsuit in Chapter 5. Through Isaiah, God sang a sad love song about His vineyard on a fertile hill. He did everything a careful owner could do—dug it, cleared the stones, planted the choicest vine, built a tower, and hewed out a winepress. He expected good grapes, but it yielded only worthless ones. Then came the six woes that named the wild grapes poisoning the nation: greed that swallowed up the poor, drunkenness that ignored the work of the Lord, mocking God’s timing, calling evil good and good evil, being wise in their own eyes, and corrupt drunk judges who sold justice for a bribe.

The verdict was clear. God would remove the hedge, break down the wall, let the vineyard be trampled, and whistle for a distant nation whose army moves with terrifying discipline. That army would answer the society that had lost both justice and righteousness.

All of this continues the covenant lawsuit that opened in chapter 1. The three threads we keep tracing stay visible:

- The Messianic Hope that breaks through even in darkness
- The Motif of the City, where Zion’s present shame stands beside her promised future glory
- The Holy One of Israel, whose holiness demands judgment yet never abandons His covenant people.

Chapter 6 now takes us behind the message to the man. Before Isaiah can proclaim the woes or sing the love song that turns into judgment, he must first see the King and be cleansed himself. This short chapter explains the authority and the heartbreak that mark everything else he writes.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The vision comes “in the year of King Uzziah’s death,” about 740 BC. Outwardly, Judah still looks prosperous, but the inward decay we have seen in chapters 3-5 is spreading. The Northern Kingdom is sliding toward captivity. Isaiah stands in Jerusalem with full access to the royal court. The Book actually starts here; the first five chapters are a prelude. Then Isaiah recounts his vision and commission. Then in Chapter 7, the account switches to the specific confrontation and prophecies of Isaiah.

EXPOSITION

Section 1: The Vision of the Holy King (verses 1–4)

Isaiah begins with the simple statement that he saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. The earthly king is dead; the true King reigns.

Above Him stand seraphim. The word *seraphim* comes from the Hebrew root שָׂרַף (saraph), which means to burn. These are burning ones, creatures of fire who attend the throne.

Scripture gives us only this one scene where they appear by name, yet their description fits the pattern of heavenly beings who serve in God’s immediate presence.

We see similar attendants in Scripture:

Ezekiel 1:5-14, 22-28, 10:15-22 – Living creatures (often identified with cherubim) stand near the throne, full of eyes, with wings, moving instantly at the direction of the Spirit, surrounded by the glory of the Lord that fills the scene. They attend the throne and have similar features as the seraphim.

Revelation 4:6-11 – The four living creatures are “in the center and around the throne,” each with six wings, full of eyes, and they lead the worship with the exact threefold “Holy, Holy, Holy” that Isaiah heard.

The scenes from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation are too similar not to draw similarities between the seraphim and the living creatures.

The seraphim each have six wings: with two they cover their face, with two they cover their feet, and with two they fly. The covering of face and feet shows reverent awe. Even these heavenly creatures cannot gaze directly at the full glory of God or stand uncovered in His presence.

Their cry fills the temple: “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” The threefold repetition is the strongest emphasis the Hebrew language can give. God is not simply holy; He is holy in a way that sets Him apart completely.

As we read, this same declaration echoes in Revelation 4:8, where the four living creatures, day and night, never cease to say, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”

Isaiah and John see the same scene. Each emphasizes God’s transcendent holiness and sovereign rule.

In verse 4, the foundations of the thresholds tremble at the voice of the one crying out, and the temple fills with smoke. This is the same kind of manifestation we see when God descends on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:18, when the glory fills the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-35, and when the cloud fills Solomon’s temple in 1 Kings 8:10-11. Smoke and trembling mark the presence of the Holy One so intensely that even the building cannot stand

unmoved. The smoke and trembling in Isaiah 6 match the glory and awe in these throne-room scenes.

Section 2: The Prophet’s Reaction and Cleansing (verses 5–7)

Isaiah’s response is immediate and personal. “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

He pronounces the same word of woe on himself that he will soon pronounce on the nation. The problem is not distant; it is in his own mouth. Unclean lips reveal an unclean heart, and he knows he cannot stand in the presence of the Holy King. Seeing God’s glory exposes every man for what he truly is.

Yet God does not consume him. One of the seraphim flies to the altar, takes a burning coal with tongs, and touches Isaiah’s mouth. “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.” The coal comes from the altar of sacrifice. The word for *forgiven* is the same word used for atonement. In one striking act God declares the guilt removed and the sin covered.

This is not the full New Testament doctrine of justification we see in Acts 13:38, where forgiveness is proclaimed to everyone who believes. Here, the cleansing prepares Isaiah for service in the presence of the King. It shows that no one, not even the prophet, can speak for God until God Himself has dealt with his sin. The imagery is vivid: forgiveness is not earned by effort; it is granted by a touch from the altar. The same principle will run through the book. Judgment is real, but provision for cleansing stands ready and free.

Section 3: The Commission and the Hard Message (verses 8–13)

Then Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Without hesitation he answers, “Here am I. Send me!” He volunteers before he knows the content of the message. It does not matter, when standing in the presence of the Holy One of Israel, forgiven and prepared, the awe and desire to serve would have been overwhelming.

The commission that follows is sobering. “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.’ Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.”

This is judicial hardening. The nation has heard the word of the Lord through the Law and the prophets and has refused it. Therefore, God gives them over to the blindness they have chosen. The language is strong, yet it matches what Scripture repeatedly shows about persistent rebellion. Israel in the wilderness saw miracles, yet when it came time to enter, they wavered in unbelief wondering what God’s intentions were (Numbers 14:1-3; Hebrews 3:7-11, 15-19).

Isaiah – Chapter 6

The same pattern appears in the days of the apostles. In Romans 11, Paul explains that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The hardening is real and it serves God's larger purpose, yet it is never the final word. A remnant remains (Romans 11:2-6, 11-12, 25-29).

Isaiah asks the honest question every faithful servant asks: "Lord, how long?" The answer is until the cities lie devastated, houses empty, the land utterly desolate, and men removed far away. This points to the coming Assyrian invasions that will crush the north and threaten the south, and beyond that to the Babylonian destruction still more than a century away.

Even in that dark word, hope remains. "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, and it will again be subject to burning, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

The tenth portion is the remnant, the small group that survives the judgment. The land will be burned again, yet the stump is not dead. In that stump is the holy seed. The word "seed" carries the same promise we have traced from Genesis 3:15 onward.

Here, it first points to the faithful remnant that will be preserved through judgment, the same remnant Isaiah will speak of again in chapters 10 and 11. At the same time, the language prepares us for the greater Seed, the Branch from the stump of Jesse who will one day spring forth and restore all things. Judgment cuts the tree down, but God never lets the Holy Seed perish.

Tying the Threads Together

Chapter 6 pulls the three threads tight.

The Holy One of Israel is seen in His glory, and that glory exposes sin and demands cleansing.

The City, represented by its prophet and its people, stands unclean before the King, yet the promise of a surviving stump shows God has not abandoned Zion.

The Messianic Hope shines in the holy seed that remains and in the greater fulfillment that will come when the Servant bears the iniquity of many.

Isaiah's ministry itself shows both the reality of the hardening and the preservation of the remnant. He spoke for more than fifty years, warned kings, walked naked as a sign, and saw some response under Hezekiah, yet the nation as a whole did not turn. The book he wrote became the permanent witness, and the holy seed endured.

God judges sin fully, yet He provides for forgiveness and preservation so that His purposes stand. This is where the lawsuit of chapters 1-5 finds its personal foundation, and where the comfort of chapters 40 and following finds its first quiet promise. The King is holy. The prophet is cleansed. The remnant will remain. And the Holy Seed will one day bring forth the Branch who makes all things new.

THE VISION OF THE HOLY KING: ISAIAH'S TRANSFORMATION



THE REVELATION OF HOLINESS

The Sovereign on the Throne: Isaiah sees the Lord exalted, His robe filling the temple.



**HOLY
HOLY
HOLY**



Seraphim cry "Holy, Holy, Holy," signaling absolute transcendence.

Six-winged Seraphing Ones: Six-winged Seraphim attend the throne in reverent awe.



CLEANSING AND COMMISSION

Purification by Altar Fire: A seraph touches Isaiah's lips with a burning coal, declaring his sin forgiven.

**"HERE AM I.
SEND ME!"**

Once cleansed, Isaiah immediately volunteers for God's mission.



THE HOPE OF THE HOLY SEED

Though facing judgment, a "stump" remains as a remnant of future hope.