

Real King, Real Throne

Isaiah 6

Turn to Isaiah 6:1 please.

1. Isaiah's Vision of God the King (6:1-4)

Isaiah 6:1 *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.* <sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."* <sup>4</sup> *At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Real King. Two words in v1 tell us God himself is a king. (1) "Throne," Isaiah sees the Lord on a *throne*, that's where kings sit.

(2) "temple." The Hebrew word for "temple" is *hecal*(hey-CALL), and *hecal* can mean either "palace" or "temple." In English we have two different words, palace or temple, but in Hebrew it was all the same.

We could put "palace" in v1 instead of "temple" and still be fair to the Hebrews words. *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 his palace.* In v5 Isaiah is as clear as possible, *my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.* God is on a throne, he's in a palace, and he's "The King."

The year the little king died, I saw the Real King, the Only King. The year death was in the little palace, I saw the Divine Life in the Big Palace.

The book of Kings tells us that Uzziah ruled for 52 years. He was a good king, long, stable leadership. When he died, there will have been turmoil, worry, confusion, instability. Who next?

But God had a prophet named Isaiah, and God showed himself to the prophet, so the prophet would understand that Uzziah's death has little to do with what happens on earth. In the year the little king died, I saw the only King, high and exalted, seated on the Real Throne.

In the little palace, the little king was dead and his throne empty. I saw the Real King on the Real Throne; in his palace there was no turmoil and confusion or worry.

Vv2-4 are about the seraphim. (This is a lot like Revelation, isn't it.) An ancient king would have guards beside him. This was a high honour. These guards needed to be completely loyal to the king, no chance at all of them every conspiring against him.

They also needed to be remarkable warriors, the last people in the whole kingdom you wanted to tangle with. These mighty guards also added to the honour of the king and the throne.

God does not need protection, but nevertheless God has these beside his Throne. Two gold cherubim were on the cover of the ark in the tabernacle, to represent these angelic guards. These seraphim have six wings: two to fly, and then out of their great respect for this king, two to cover their feet and two to cover their face.

And they call back and forth, “*Holy, holy, holy, Yahweh Almighty, Jehovah Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.*” These two seraphim are watching God, and they are watching earth, and they are calling back and forth to each other about God and about earth. *Holy, holy, holy, Yahweh Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.*

When they look at him, they are overwhelmed with his holiness; and when they look at earth, they are overwhelmed with his glory on earth. We don’t see earth that way; a bit of a problem.

One of the joys of southern Manitoba is a fine summer thunderstorm. Not everyone likes these, but some do, including me. I’ve heard loud thunder that made our windows rattle. You can feel the walls vibrate. I don’t know if I’ve ever heard thunder than makes the ground shake.

When the seraphim call back and forth, according to v4, the doorposts and thresholds shook. These seraphim, calling out the holiness of God and his glory on earth made the ground shake. Not just the doors, but the door posts; not just the walls, but the threshold, the bottom door plate.

So these seraphim – don’t picture chubby little guys carrying harps. When these two worship God, it is like the mightiest thunder, the ground shakes, the temple shook from the bottom up.

V4b *the temple was filled with smoke.* This way of describing the cloud of God’s presence, the shekinah glory that stayed over the tabernacle in the wilderness. God’s glory filled the temple.

God showed Isaiah all this so he would not be disturbed by the empty little throne in the troubled little palace at the death of the little king. And we need to understand a couple of things about this scene. This is not in a corner of heaven, and the seraphim are not the only ones worshipping God. This is the center of the universe, and 99.9% of all creation worships God like this.

And this is all happening right now. God showed Isaiah this in the temple, but it was going on in heaven on Isaiah’s day, and Ezekiel sees the same, and 800 years later John in Rev 4-5 saw the same, and in Rev 4-5 it’s clear this never ends. It is happening at this very moment.

We happen to live on earth: earth is a rebel outpost against this King, Yahweh Almighty. We live in a rebel outpost. We are patriots, worshippers, in a rebel outpost. When God’s people on earth worship him, as we did today, we join up with 99.9% of what all creation is doing at that very moment.

Isaiah chapter 6 has four parts. Isaiah's vision of God is the first part. Second part:

## 2. Isaiah's sinfulness and healing (Isa 6:5-7)

<sup>5</sup> *"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."*<sup>6</sup> *Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.*<sup>7</sup> *With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."*

When Isaiah saw God, high and exalted, he was horrified. He's a sinner. He's contaminated by his own sins, and he's contaminated by the sins the people around him, and he's in the presence of the holy glorious King, the Lord Almighty. He knows he's about to die. He shouts his distress: "I am ruined! This can only end one way, I am a dead man."

Then a seraphim touches him with a coal, takes away his guilt, atones for his sins.

Unclean lips here do not just mean sinful words. Jesus said in Mark 7 that the darkness in our hearts comes out our mouths and defiles us. What is in peoples' hearts will come out their mouths sooner or later. So just as "heart" can be used as a symbol for the whole person, the real person, so "lips" or "tongue" can be used as a symbol for the whole person.

What this section tells us is that if people actually turn to God, knowing that they are sinners, and that it's a problem, forgiveness and cleansing and healing are available, in fact quickly available. If it happened this way for Isaiah, it could happen just as easily for the people, too.

That's Isaiah's sinfulness and healing.

## 3. God's Call to Isaiah – Make Their Hearts Hard (6:8-10)

<sup>8</sup> *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!"*

This sometimes gets used as a call to evangelize. It is not a call to evangelize. It is a call speak to God's people, because God's people have wandered away. But what is the actual message?

<sup>9</sup> *He said, "Go and tell this people:*

*"Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."*

<sup>10</sup> *Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."*

These are difficult verses. They are not ambiguous, they are clear. What makes them difficult is that they do not sound like the God of the Bible as we understand him.

What God tells Isaiah is this: “You, Isaiah will call them to me, but they will not understand, they will not perceive, their eyes and ears and heart will get thicker and thicker to my call. And that will happen because IF they would really see and hear and understand, they would turn to me, and I would heal them as I healed you, Isaiah.”

“And I have decided, Isaiah, that this will not happen. I have decided that they must be judged for their sins. That’s why you will call them to me, and it will make their hearts harder.”

That’s God’s call to Isaiah. “You call them back to me, I am sending you to do that, and I am telling you where it will end up. They will not hear or understand, so they will not turn to me and be healed, because I have decided to judge them.” That’s section 3, God’s call to Isaiah is to make their hearts hard.

#### 4. How long, Lord? (6:11-13)

<sup>11</sup> Then I said, “For how long, Lord?” And he answered:

“Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant,

until the houses are left deserted, and the fields ruined and ravaged,

<sup>12</sup> until the Lord has sent everyone far away, and the land is utterly forsaken.

<sup>13</sup> And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down,

so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Two times in this vision Isaiah was distressed, first in v5, a sinner in God’s presence, and second when he learns what his message will produce.

How long? Until they are completely ruined, the cities and houses and fields deserted and ruined, and the are all taken far away. But there is hope. When trees are cut down a stump is left, and there will be holy life in the stump in the land.

#### 3. (Again) God’s Call to Isaiah – Make their Hearts Hard.

Vv9-10 - God said, “Go and tell this people:

“‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’

Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears,

understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

These two verses take up more space in the NT than any other OT Scripture. There is a lot of OT quoted in the NT, but none as much as these two verses. That's because these verses sorted out a NT problem that we no longer feel.

Put yourself in the place of a first century Jew who knows that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. You are Peter or James or John or Martha or Mary or Paul or Apollos or Lydia. Your people, the Jews, have been hoping for centuries, hundreds of years, that God would send the Christ. And in your lifetime, God DID send the Christ to his people, Jesus of Nazareth.

And then something happened that had never occurred to any Jew: the Jewish nation rejected the Christ. God send his savior to his people, his ultimate deliverer, and the people did not want him. The priests don't want him, the elders don't want him, the Jewish council does not want him, the Pharisees and scribes and law experts too – none of them want the Christ.

For the Jewish followers, now what? God's plan has failed. God finally gave us the promised rescuer, he put his plan to deliver us into motion, and we threw him out. It's over. God brought the Jews his eternal plan, and we the Jews were not interested. We wrecked God's plan. We destroyed God's plan.

The one who first saw this coming was Jesus. He could see that the Jews were rejecting him, the Christ. So what about God's plan? Jesus found the answer, the solution, in the Scriptures. Where else. Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:9-10. Not to his enemies, and not to the crowds, but to his followers. (Matt 13:13-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40; Acts 28:25-27)

Jesus knew that Isaiah 6:9-10 described not only what would happen when **Isaiah** preached God's call to the Jews, but also what would happen when he, **Jesus**, preached to the Jews. And for Peter and James and Marth and Mary and Paul and Lydia and Silas, this was good news.

Why? Simple – Isaiah 6:9-10 told them that this was God's plan all along! The rejecting Jews had not wrecked God's plan, they had not destroyed God's promised kingdom. This was God's plan and purpose all along. It did mean trouble was coming to the Jews, which was not good, but God's plan was carrying on as he intended, this was all a part of his purpose.

And that is why Isa 6:9-10 has more space in the NT than any other OT Scripture.

And this takes us back to the very start – Isaiah's vision of the King, the Lord Almighty, high and exalted on his throne.

### 1. (Again) Isaiah's Vision of God the King (6:1-4)

The little king is dead, the Real King is alive and well, never better, in the little palace there is gloom and turmoil, in the Real Palace there is worship and glory that never ends.

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

In Isaiah 6, there is trouble on earth. Uzziah the king is dead. The Jews will not pay attention to Isaiah’s preaching. They will be ruined, and carried into Babylon.

*The whole earth is full of his glory.* Really? The whole earth? Is the little palace filled with God’s glory, with its empty little throne and those worried people? Will Israel be filled with God’s glory when the land is ruined and the people are gone into exile? Yes, yes, yes.

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”* It is beyond our understanding, we don’t get it, I don’t get it, but it’s clear to the seraphim that because of who God is, holy, holy, holy king, Lord Almighty, all the earth shines with his glory every minute of every day.

Even though earth is a rebel outpost, it is a rebel outpost in God’s creation, and the rebels themselves are made in his image and likeness, and he feeds the rebels every day, gives them life and breath and all they have, he gives the rebels sunshine and rain and the joy of harvests and friendship and celebrations.

God’s blessing is on the whole earth, even though it is rebel outpost and people do some awful things. Uzziah the king is dead, and the Jews are headed into ruin and exile. But as soon as we stop worshipping God, we have lost track of what’s really going on in the universe. Let’s not lose track of what’s really going on in the universe.

Isaiah’s response to all this at the end of chapter 8 – *“I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face, I will put my trust in him.”*

[Prayer] O God, we somehow find ourselves in your Real Palace, in front of you the Real King on the Real Throne, and all around us incredible worship happens right now, and your glory is shining through all over the place, heaven and earth. We are blindfolded to most of this, but we know it to be true. We also worship you as the holy, holy, holy King, the Lord Almighty, whose glory fills the whole earth. May your Spirit bring this picture back to us again and again. And when there is trouble in one of our little palaces, we will wait for you, Lord, we will hope in you, we will put our trust in you, because you are the Real King. Amen.