

ISAIAH 6

A VISION AND A COMMISSION

In the year that King Uzziah of Judah died (759 BC), the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord Jehovah Himself, sitting upon His throne. Judah's king had passed away, but Judah's God still lives and reigns! From the mortality of great and righteous men, we should learn to look up with an eye of faith to the King Who is eternal and immortal.

Let us fix our thoughts for a while upon this wondrous vision! Let us try to realize that although they are hidden from our physical eyes, the throne and the glory of God exist at this very moment! And the seraphim's song that the Prophet heard back then is still sounding now, even though our physical ears cannot hear it. Isaiah was highly favored in being permitted to see and hear all these things; but our Lord has said to us, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!" (John 20:29) And blessed indeed are those who have, so to speak, a continual vision of the glory of God! Blessed are those who – amidst the din and bustle of life – still have their ears open to the seraphim's chant: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" And blessed are those who – amidst the darkness of affliction – can still keep their eye steadily fixed upon the glorious throne with the rainbow of hope around it, and with the God-Man sitting upon it. Let each of us seek this happy attainment!

Let us try to carry the visions of heaven's glory and the echoes of heaven's music along with us in our daily life. If we are Christ's people, we may say to ourselves, "Yet a little while – and I shall be before that throne, and I shall share that glory, and I shall sing that song!" And in the meantime, we are encouraged to think of that throne as the mercy-seat of grace (Heb. 4:16), which we may approach with confidence. As glorious and holy as this throne is, even the vilest sinner may come boldly to it – for Christ the Lamb sits upon it! The marks of His sufferings are a continual memorial of the redemption-work which He has accomplished for sinners.

Verse 5 relates the humbling effect which the vision of God's glory produced upon the Prophet – causing him to cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone!" The believer's humility and sense of sin deepen, as his views of the Lord's glory and holiness brighten. But in verses 6 and 7, we read how God supplied consolation to His self-abased and contrite servant. Those who are struck down with the visions of Jehovah's glory shall soon be raised up again with visits of His grace. One of the seraphim took a live coal from the altar and touched it to Isaiah's lips, telling him that his iniquity was taken away, and his sin was purged. The altar with the burning fire and the sacrifice upon it is a picture of the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice of Himself in the fire of God's justice. Nothing

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Isaiah's vision of the glory and majesty of God – verses 1-7*
- ❖ *He is commissioned to go, in God's name, to preach to His people – verses 8-13*

is powerful enough to comfort and cleanse the soul, except that which is taken from His perfect sacrifice and intercession. But what blessed words for a poor, humbled sinner to hear: “Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged!”

See, in verse 8, the cheerful readiness and alacrity for work that is brought about by an assurance of forgiveness! Isaiah had been in a melancholy frame of mind, full of doubts and fears; but now that he had the assurance of the pardon of his sins, the cloud dispersed and he was fit for service – and eager for it, too. “Here am I!” he cried. “Send me!” Every child of God will find this to be his own experience. As long as he stands in doubt of his relationship with God, and as long as he is uncertain whether he is forgiven or not, the wheels of duty will drag along heavily. But when a person is clearly satisfied that his iniquity is taken away and his sin purged, and when he perceives Christ’s work to be sufficient to put away his sin – then, looking boldly up to God as his reconciled Father, he can run in the way of His commandments with a firm and joyous step. And whatever the duty may be to which he is called, he can cheerfully say, “Here am I, send me!”

The Lord commissioned Isaiah to speak to His people; but in reference to these people, he is told to make their ears heavy and to shut their eyes. How sad that some may sit under the preaching of the Gospel; and yet their hearts remain hardened, and their consciences are stupefied (2 Cor. 2:16). They may perhaps even claim to approve of the truth of the terrors of hell, or of the greatness and tenderness of Christ’s love; but they are wholly uninfluenced by them. Their ears are heavy, and their eyes are shut; and the very frequency with which God’s truth is put before them only adds to their carelessness and insensibility. Let us pray for grace that we ourselves may not fall into this dangerous state! We come together every day as a family, and God’s Word is read and explained. Are our eyes always open, and our ears always attentive? Are we always eager to learn and apply the lessons which the Scriptures convey? Or on the contrary, does not the daily repetition tempt us to be heedless in our listening and careless about profiting by it? Let us be on our guard in this matter, and earnestly ask God to give us that faith which will make His truth always fresh and bright to us!

The question of the Prophet in verse 11 is very touching: “Lord, how long?” Shall it always be thus? Must faithful ministers always labor in vain among the people? Will things never be better? This has been the cry of the Church in all ages: “Lord! How long?” But the Lord hears the cry! He has bidden His people, for the last 2,000 years, to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” And He will not disregard this prayer. However, He has His own appointed time, and His people must wait for it. “Be patient, therefore, brethren ... stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!” (James 5:7-8)

Lord God Almighty! We lift up our voices here on earth, and join them with those of the seraphim above: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!” Amen.

