



Isaiah 6:1-13

The Throne Room ~ Isaiah’s Seventh Woe ~ Isaiah’s Message

These 13 verses in Isaiah paint a dramatic and colorful picture of God commissioning a man, in this case, Isaiah himself.. The story grabs your attention from the first verse and doesn’t let go until the last. One of the reasons readers can relate so well to Isaiah’s experience is that any one of us could be called by God this way. In fact, many people have been encouraged in their own personal calling by hearing Isaiah’s words, “Here I am, send me!”

As we dig deeper into Isaiah 6, let’s put ourselves into the picture and allow what is happening with him in God’s presence to stir our imagination. Encountering the Living God and the spiritual beings that surround His throne will change your life, even when the words are read and applied. Let’s encounter the stories deeply as we can and find for ourselves what stirs in the presence of the Lord of Angel Armies!

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 6:1 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.</p>	<p>a 6:1 King Uzziah died a leper (2 Chron. 26:23). It is likely that the prophecies of Isaiah chs. 1–5 were given before Uzziah’s death in 740 BC. The prophet realized that God would judge even a king if he “sinned. Isaiah saw the holiness of God in the judgment of the leprous king and knew that if his uncle Uzziah would be judged, he would be too. When we see the way he deals with sin, our eyes are opened and we see the Lord as he really is.</p> <p>b 6:1 Although the word for “Lord” here is Adonai (“Sovereign or Master”), we see from vv. 3 and 5 that it was “the Lord God, Commander of hosts.” Long before Jesus was born, Isaiah saw his glory (John 12:41).</p> <p>c 6:1 Isaiah mentions this throne seven times (6:1; 9:7; 14:13; 16:5; 22:23; 47:1; 66:1). Transported into the throne room, Isaiah overheard the solemn chanting of the seraphim. He felt the trembling of the very foundations of the temple, and he witnessed the rainbow glory robe of almighty God. He also saw an altar, fire with burning coals, antiphonal singing, and flying seraphim.</p> <p>d 6:1 This very robe of glory has touched us in Christ, for we are his temple. When we “put on Christ,” we are robed in his splendor before God and angels. Just the seam[...]</p> <p>e 6:2 Or “seraphim (burning ones),” the fiery custodians of the holiness of God. The seraphs were a class of angels stationed around the throne of God. Seraph comes from the Hebrew word for “burn.” Some “have equated the seraphim with the living creatures mentioned in Rev. 4:6–9. They were on fire, burning with the adoration of God.</p> <p>f 6:2 With wings folded upward and wings folded downward, they appeared to Isaiah as huge flames of fire. What Isaiah saw is still taking place today in heaven’s throne room.</p>	<p>Isaiah 6:1 “In the year that King Uzziah died, a I clearly saw the Lord. b He was seated on his exalted throne, towering high above me. c His long, flowing robe of splendor spread throughout the temple. d ² Standing above him were the angels of flaming fire, e each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces in reverence, with two wings they covered their feet, and with two wings they flew.f</p>

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<p>³ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!</p> <p>⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 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!</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.”</p> <p>⁹ And he said, “Go, and say to this people:” ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.</p>	<p>g 6:3 Almost every Jewish commentator speaks of the threefold repetition of the word holy as a reference to the way God manifests his holiness (1) in heaven, (2) in this world, and (3) in the ages to come. Today we can see the triune God being praised: Holy (Father), Holy (Son), Holy (Spirit). Throughout church history this sacred chant has been heard in liturgy, worship, and song. Fifty times Isaiah calls him “the Holy One of Israel.</p> <p>h 6:3 Isaiah saw the sinfulness of man; the seraphim saw the glory of God. Isaiah had to see what the angels see. Every true voice for God must have the revelation of glory filling the earth. Without this vision, we are only seeing part of the truth. What fills the earth is his glory, not our sinfulness. This is occurring now, not just in the future.</p> <p>i 6:4 What caused this shaking? The celestial praises of God, sung to their highest, caused the foundations to shake.</p> <p>j 6:4 Or “(holy) smoke.” This cloud (smoke) is mentioned seven times in Isaiah: 4:5; 6:4; 9:18; 14:31; 34:10; 51:6; 65:5.</p> <p>k 6:5 The Hebrew word nidmêti can be translated “finished, cut off, pierced through, devastated, destroyed, doomed, undone, silenced, “ruined.” See also Judg. 13:22; Job 42:5–6. Isaiah pronounces his seventh woe upon himself.</p> <p>l 6:5 Isaiah was a prophet who made his living from speaking, yet he calls himself a man with unclean lips. He declares himself a sinner who has offended with his words. He has offended others, and he has offended the holiness of God. Polluted with sin, his words (and ours) are “unclean” (foul, defiled, polluted, contaminated).</p> <p>m 6:7 Or “Your sin is atoned for.” Instead of the seraph throwing him out of the sanctuary, he brought God’s cleansing coal. It was a coal, for when God judged sin, only coals of fire were left; it speaks of a finished sacrifice. The fires of wrath were spent on Christ. The word for “coal” is ritzpah and means “ceremonial stone.” In the temple, incense was poured upon the ritzpah stone. Then the stone was placed in the fire, creating the fragrance of the burning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. This white-hot stone that was placed on Isaiah’s lips is perhaps the “shining white stone” given to the overcomers (Rev. 2:17).</p> <p>n 5:12 See 1 Sam. 12:24.</p> <p>o 5:13 See Prov. 10:21; Isa. 1:3; Hos. 4:6.</p> <p>p 5:13 Or “men of glory.”</p> <p>q 5:13 How ironic! Their thirst for strong drink was their downfall; now they have nothing to drink at all.</p>	<p>³ And one called out to another, saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, Commander of Angel Armies! g The whole earth is filled with his glory! h”</p> <p>⁴ The thunderous voice of the fiery angels caused the foundations of the thresholds to tremble i as the cloud of glory j filled the temple!</p> <p>⁵ Then I stammered and said, “Woe is me! I’m destroyed k—doomed as a sinful man! For my words are tainted and I live among people who talk the same way. l King Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies! My eyes have gazed upon him!</p> <p>⁶ Then out of the smoke, one of the angels of fire flew to me. He had in his hands a burning coal he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my lips with it and said, “See? The burning coal from the altar has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away; your sin is blotted out. m</p> <p>⁸ Then I heard the Lord saying, “Whom should I send to my people? Who will go to represent us?” I spoke up and said, “I will be the one. Send me.” n</p> <p>⁹ Then he said, “Go and tell the people: ‘You keep listening but understand nothing. You keep watching but learn nothing.’ ¹⁰ Go and preach a message that will make their hearts dull, o their ears plugged, and their eyes blind. p Otherwise, their eyes will begin to see, their ears will begin to hear, their hearts will begin to understand, and they will return to me for healing and be healed.q</p>

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<p>¹¹ Then I said, “Lord, how long will this go on?” And he replied, “Until their towns are empty, their houses are deserted, and the whole country is a wasteland; ¹² until the LORD has sent everyone away, and the entire land of Israel lies deserted. ¹³ If even a tenth—a remnant—survive, it will be invaded again and burned. But as a terebinth or oak tree leaves a stump when it is cut down, so Israel’s stump will be a holy seed.</p>	<p>r 5:14 Or Sheol, a poetic term for the underworld. s 5:14 See Hab. 2:5. t 5:15 Or “The eyes of pride are brought low.” u 5:18 Or “cords of emptiness.”</p>	<p>¹¹ Then I asked, “O Lord, for how long?” He answered, “Until their houses and cities are destroyed and uninhabited and their land a desolate wasteland. ¹² Until the Lord has exiled them all to a distant country and the entire land lies deserted. ¹³ Yet if even a tenth r remains there, s it will be burned again. It will be like a fallen oak or terebinth tree when it is felled; the stump still lives to grow again. t Now, the “stump” is the holy seed. u</p>

- **Commentary: Bible Knowledge Commentary**, John A. Martin

• **ISAIAH’S COMMISSION (CHAP. 6)**

Though this is one of the better-known chapters in the Book of Isaiah, at least **three problems** in it have caused debate among Bible students.

The first problem concerns the chronological relationship of chapter 6, which records God’s call of Isaiah, to the preceding five chapters on judgment and deliverance. Did Isaiah minister for a period of time before being commissioned, or is this chapter out of order chronologically but in order logically? Some have argued that since the vision occurred “in the year that King Uzziah died” (v. 1) Isaiah must have had some previous ministry (chaps. 1-5) since he is said to have ministered during the reign of Uzziah (1:1). It can be countered, however, that Isaiah saw this vision anytime up to 12 months before the king’s death. In that sense then his vision was “in” Uzziah’s reign.

It is possible, as some suggest, that Isaiah, seeing the sinful condition of the nation (chaps. 1-5), set himself apart from that nation until he saw the vision of God and then realized that he too was part of the sin problem. He also was “a man of unclean lips” (6:5).

On the other hand it is possible that the vision and commissioning of chapter 6 came before he delivered the messages in chapters 1-5 and that he recorded this experience here as a fitting logical climax to the stinging indictment in those chapters. Chapter 6 emphasizes the

extreme depravity of the nation, contrasting it with God’s holiness. Here Isaiah also emphasized that the people lacked spiritual insight and would not turn from their sinful condition.

A second problem pertains to whom Isaiah saw. Isaiah “saw the LORD” (v. 1), whom he called “the LORD Almighty” (v. 3) and “the King, the LORD Almighty” (v. 5). Because the Apostle John wrote that Isaiah “saw Jesus’ glory” (John 12:41), Isaiah may have seen the preincarnate Christ, who because of His deity is the Lord. The prophet did not see the very essence of God for no man can see Him (Ex. 33:18; John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12) since He is invisible (1 Tim. 1:17). But there was no problem in Isaiah’s seeing God in a vision or a theophany, much as did Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:3-28), Daniel (Dan. 7:2, 9-10), and others.

A third problem is related to the fact that Isaiah’s vision was in the temple (Isa. 6:1). Was Isaiah there because he was a priest? Jeremiah was the son of a priest (Jer. 1:1) and Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek. 1:3), but the Book of Isaiah says nothing about Isaiah being of priestly lineage. If he were not carrying out priestly duties he may have been a worshiper there when he saw the heavenly vision. Or perhaps he, like Ezekiel (Ezek. 8:1-4), was not physically in the temple but was transported there in a vision.

- **Isaiah’s vision of the Lord (6:1-4)**

- **6:1.** Since Isaiah ministered during King Uzziah’s reign (1:1) Isaiah’s vision of God in the year ... Uzziah died would have occurred within the 12 calendar months before or after the king’s death in 739 B.C. If the vision occurred before Isaiah began his ministry then obviously the vision was before the king’s death. However, if the vision came sometime after the prophet’s ministry started—see comments earlier under 8. Isaiah’s commission (chap. 6)”—then Isaiah could have seen the vision within the calendar year (739 B.C.) either shortly before or shortly after the king died.
 - This time notation points to a contrast between the human king and the divine King (v. 5), God Himself and to some contrasts between Uzziah and Isaiah. In Uzziah’s long (52-year), prosperous reign (2 Chron. 26:1-15) many people were away from the Lord and involved in sin (2 Kings 15:1-4; Uzziah is also called Azariah). By contrast, God is holy (Isa. 6:3). In pride, Uzziah disobediently entered the temple (insensitive to the sin involved) and was struck with leprosy which made him ceremonially unclean (2 Chron. 26:16-20). Isaiah, however, was sensitive to sin, for he stated that he and his people were spiritually unclean (Isa. 6:5). Though Uzziah was excluded from the temple (2 Chron. 26:21) Isaiah was not.
 - Three things struck Isaiah about God: He was seated on a throne, He was high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. In the most holy place of the temple in Jerusalem, God’s glory was evident between the cherubim on the atonement cover over the ark of the covenant. Therefore some Israelites may have erroneously thought that God was fairly small. However, Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer for the new temple, had stated that no temple could contain God and that in fact even the heavens could not contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). Therefore Isaiah did not see God on the ark of the covenant, but on a throne. Almost 150 years later Ezekiel had a similar experience. He envisioned God being borne along on a great chariot throne by living creatures called cherubim (Ezek. 1). To Isaiah, the throne emphasized that the Lord is indeed the true King of Israel.
 - God’s being “high and exalted” symbolized His position before the nation. The people were wanting God to work on their behalf (Isa. 5:19) but He was doing so, as evidenced by His lofty position among them.

- The Lord's long robe speaks of His royalty and majesty. His being in the temple suggests that though He hates mere religiosity (1:11-15) He still wanted the nation to be involved in the temple worship. The temple and the temple sacrifices pictured the righteous dealings of the sovereign God with His covenant people.
- **6:2-4.** Seraphs, angelic beings who were above the Lord, are referred to in the Scriptures only here. "Seraphs" means "to burn," possibly suggesting that they were ardent in their zeal for the Lord. It is also noteworthy that one of the seraphs took a burning coal to Isaiah (v. 6). They had six wings (the four living creatures Ezekiel saw each had four wings, Ezek. 1:5, 11). Covering their faces with two wings indicates their humility before God. Their covering their feet with two other wings may denote service to God, and their flying may speak of their ongoing activity in proclaiming God's holiness and glory.
 - In calling to one another the seraphs, whose number is not given, were proclaiming that the LORD Almighty is holy. The threefold repetition of the word holy suggests supreme or complete holiness. This threefold occurrence does not suggest the Trinity, as some have supposed. The Trinity is supported in other ways (e.g., see comments on Isa. 6:8). Repeating a word three times for emphasis is common in the Old Testament (e.g., Jer. 22:29; Ezek. 21:27). The seraphs also proclaimed that His glory fills the earth (cf. Num. 14:21) much as His robe filled the temple. By contrast the people of Judah were unholy (cf. Isa. 5; 6:5) though they were supposed to be a holy people (Ex. 22:31; Deut. 7:6).
 - As the seraphs cried out, Isaiah saw the temple shake and then it was filled with smoke (Isa. 6:4). The thresholds (cf. Amos 9:1) were large foundation stones on which the doorposts stood. The shaking (cf. Ex. 19:18) suggested the awesome presence and power of God. The smoke was probably the cloud of glory which Isaiah's ancestors had seen in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21; 16:10) and which the priests in Solomon's day had viewed in the dedicated temple (1 Kings 8:10-13).
- **Isaiah's response to the vision (6:5)**
 - **6:5.** This vision of God's majesty, holiness, and glory made Isaiah realize that he was a sinner. When Ezekiel saw God's glory he too responded with humility. (Cf. the responses of Job, Job 42:5-6; Peter, Luke 5:8; and the Apostle John, Rev. 1:17.) Isaiah had pronounced woes (threats of judgment) on the nation (Isa. 5:8-23), but now by saying Woe to me! (cf. 24:16) he realized he was subject to judgment. This was because he was unclean. When seen next to the purity of God's holiness, the impurity of human sin is all the more evident. The prophet's unclean lips probably symbolized his attitudes and actions as well as his words, for a person's words reflect his thinking and relate to his actions. Interestingly Isaiah identified with his people who also were sinful (a people of unclean lips).
- **Isaiah's cleansing and message (6:6-13)**
 - **6:6-7.** Realizing his impurity, Isaiah was cleansed by God, through the intermediary work of one of the seraphs. It is fitting that a seraph (perhaps meaning a "burning one") touched Isaiah's lips with a hot coal ... from the altar, either the altar of burnt offering, on which a fire was always burning (Lev. 6:12), or the altar of incense where incense was burned each morning and evening (Ex. 30:1, 7-8). This symbolic action signified the removal of the prophet's guilt and his sin. Of course this is what the entire nation needed. The Judahites needed to respond as Isaiah did, acknowledging their need of cleansing from sin. But unlike the prophet, most members of the nation refused to

admit they had a spiritual need. Though they, through the priests, burned sacrifices at the temple, their lives needed the purifying action of God's "fire" of cleansing.

- **6:8.** The rest of this chapter deals with the message Isaiah was to preach to Judah. Significantly he was not called to service till he had been cleansed. After hearing the seraph's words (vv. 3, 7) he then heard the Lord's voice.
 - God asked, Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us? The word "Us" in reference to God hints at the Trinity (cf. "Us" in Gen. 1:26; 11:7). This doctrine, though not explicit in the Old Testament, is implicit for God is the same God in both Testaments.
 - The question "Who will go?" does not mean God did not know or that He only hoped someone would respond. He asked the question to give Isaiah, now cleansed, an opportunity for service. The prophet knew that the entire nation needed the same kind of awareness of God and cleansing of sin he had received. So he responded that he would willingly serve the Lord (Here am I).
- **6:9-10.** Probably Isaiah, responding as he did in verse 8, thought that his serving the Lord would result in the nation's cleansing. However, the Lord told him his message would not result in much spiritual response. The people had not listened before and they would not listen now. The Lord did not delight in judging His people, but discipline was necessary because of their disobedience. In fact the people, on hearing Isaiah's message, would become even more hardened against the Lord. Interestingly six of the seven lines in verse 10 are in a *chiasm*: heart ... ears ... eyes are mentioned in lines 1-3, and in lines 4-6 they are reversed: eyes ... ears ... hearts. This is a common arrangement of material in the Old Testament. Possibly this pattern emphasizes the "eyes," mentioned in the middle. Jesus quoted part of this verse to explain that Israel in His day could not believe because they would not believe (see comments on John 12:40).
- **6:11-13.** Isaiah's response to the message implies that he was ready to speak whatever God wanted him to say. Yet he wondered how long he would have to go on delivering a message of judgment to which the people would be callous. The Lord answered that Isaiah was to proclaim the message until His judgment came, that is, till the Babylonian Exile actually occurred and the people were deported from the land (v. 12), thus leaving their ruined cities and fields (v. 11). Though Isaiah did not live that long, God meant he should keep on preaching even if he did live to see Judah's downfall. The tenth that remained in the land (v. 13) refers to the poor who were left in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:14). But most of them were laid waste (Jer. 41:10-18; 43:4-7).
 - Isaiah, perhaps discouraged by such a negative response and terrible results, was then assured by the LORD that not all was lost. A remnant would be left. God compared that remnant to stumps of terebinth and oak trees. From this stump or holy seed of a believing remnant would come others who would believe. Though Judah's population would be almost totally wiped out or exiled, God promised to preserve a small number of believers in the land.

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. Think about it for a moment. Why do you think the Lord brought Isaiah into His presence in chapter 6? What was He wanted Isaiah to see and do in this encounter that may have not happened had He just called him verbally?

2. Take a look at the coal the angel brought to Isaiah in verses 6 and 7. What was Isaiah's sin? Do you find it interesting that Isaiah was the deliverer of judgement against the nation of Israel, yet when he comes into the presence of God, His sins needed to be dealt with? How was all this preparing Isaiah for what he was being commissioned to accomplish?
3. As you consider your personal encounters with the Lord, what message has he given YOU for the people in your sphere of influence? Has the Lord ever given you a spiritual "push" when it's come to that message? Has He ever promised you an outcome if you don't shrink back from your assignment?
4. If you could sit down with Don Jenson, the Mayor of Longview, and spend an hour with him sharing your heart for Longview, what would be three topics you would cover with him? Knowing what you know about Isaiah's commissioning in chapter 6, what would your encouragement be to the Mayor, personally?
5. If you could do a training class for the people at Evangel that would prepare them to receive an assignment from the Lord, what would you entitle it? What would be the three main topics you would cover in the class?