

The Savior And The Seer

No one in Israel could forget the year 739 B.C. Politically, the king, Uzziah, who had enjoyed a 52-year reign, had his share of leadership issues. Scripture does denote he did lead in a godly, righteous fashion which pleased God (2 Kings 15). However, he spiritually compromised in key areas. He failed to remove pagan altars in Judah, allowing people to worship anyone and anything . . . all for the sake of peace, I'm sure. His biggest failure occurred the day he arrogantly entered the Temple and sought to act like a High Priest (2 Chron. 26:16-20). God responded by striking him immediately with leprosy. The disease plagued him and constantly reminded him of his sin until the day he died in 739 B.C.

With the country now thrown into turmoil, God permitted one lone prophet, Isaiah, to see into His jaw-dropping throne room. I'll let the prophet tell you what he saw and heard:

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to 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 were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

A small, seemingly insignificant mercy seat was situated between the representative cherubim angels on the Ark of the Covenant; however, here we see the Lord of the universe sitting confidently on a massive throne which loomed above the floor of his magnificent and stunning throne room. His presence on the throne demonstrates for all time that He is, in fact, always in control of what is going on among the nations.

Draped over his shoulders, a royal robe to beat all royal robes flowed down the back and sides of the throne and spilled out over the entire floor of the temple. In ancient cultures, the bigger the robe the more powerful the potentate. Isaiah got the picture. No God compares to the God seated on this throne.

As he beheld this shocking, mind-numbing scene, the prophet couldn't help but hear the rhythmically chant of a special class of angels called seraphim. The "im" ending in Hebrew is plural, and this tells us there were many of these angels present. Located in the air above the throne, they looked down and in unison continually said,

יְקָרָא זֶה אֱלֹהֵי אִמְרֵי קְדוֹשׁוֹ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." Repetition in Hebrew is for intense emphasis. Isaiah got the picture. At the core of His being God is holy, which, in turn, means He is the essence of all that is true, righteous, and morally pure.

A deep, powerful voice, bone-rattling voice, which was probably that of God, spoke words which resulted in the massive foundation stones of the massive doorposts creaking, shaking, and snapping as if they were going to shatter. Smoke, which originated from the brilliant glory of God, and probably from the bodies of the seraphim . . . for their name in Hebrew means "to burn," began to fill every square inch of the glorious throne room of God.

The scene was awesome and ominous at the same time. The scene also showed Isaiah his spiritual self.

⁵ So I said: "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 my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

Whatever Isaiah, the prophet of God, thought about his level of spiritual growth and maturation vaporized instantly when his holiness was contrasted with the absolute perfect holiness of God Almighty. There was no comparison. He, along with the people of his nation had a spiritual problem. They were sinners in need of cleansing, and as the prophet quickly discovered, God is the only One capable of dealing with sin in His creatures.

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." (Isa. 6).

The coal in the seraphim's hand was probably from the heavenly altar of burnt offerings, the place where sinners offer sacrifice for the coverage of sins. We know this altar is in God's presence for when God gave Moses the tabernacle blueprints some 700 years' prior, all the earthly components were based on a pattern of their heavenly counterparts (Exodus 25:9, 40; 26:30; Numbers 8:4). Interesting. When Isaiah humbled himself as he saw his sin, God moved in love and compassion to cleanse him of his sin so he could be his prophetic voice.

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" (Isa. 6).

The "us" denotes the Holy Trinity. The Trinity was looking for a man to speak to the nation about God and God's ways so people could find cleansing from sin as Isaiah had. With his sin purged and with the holiness of God burned into his heart and mind, Isaiah knew what he had to do. "Then I said, Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6). And go he did to a nation which desperately needed to see their sin and turn to God so they, too, could be purged of sin before God who is holy.

Contrast this heavenly revelation with the birth of Jesus.

- The same God who sat on a glorious throne in the heavenly dimension traded it for a dusty, dirty and hard stone cradle used as a feeding trough for animals.
- The same God who constantly heard the seraphim speak about His holy character, heard that night the discordant chant of a few donkeys, a couple of noisy goats, a large lowing cow, and several bleating sheep.
- The same God who spoke and massive stones quaked with the force of His voice, opted to cry loudly and coo quietly as the God-man in the form of an innocent baby.
- The same God who was eternally clothed with a royal robe of utter beauty, that holy night willingly chose to be swaddled in cloth secured by a poor, but quite happy, Jewish young mother.

- The same God who was called “The LORD of hosts,” which is literally translated “The LORD of angelic armies (of untold number),” now as a baby willingly parked that divine authority so he could be dependent on a mother and father who would command Him.
- The same God whose glowing presence causes smoke to issue forth from Him to shroud His creatures from the intensity of His glory, stepped into a stable where odd smells filled the air and the only smoke probably emanated from a flickering oil lamp or two.
- The same God, the second member of the Holy Trinity, who always beheld the face of the Heavenly and Holy Father, that night opened his new earthly eyes for the first time and focused on the face of his earthly father, Joseph. He also locked those loving eyes on his earthly mother, which represented a relationship He had never known before. She, likewise, had never looked at the face of God, but now she, and Joseph, peered into the eyes not just of their new firstborn, but into the eyes of God. Humbling, isn't it?

The question of all of this is clear, isn't it, this Christmas Eve? Why? Why did Jesus, the Lord of glory, leave glory to come here? Not too many hours before the Jews betrayed their King and Messiah into the hands of the Romans, Jesus prayed what is known as His High Priestly prayer. The concluding words of this moving, memorable prayer are most instructive:

²⁰ "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ "O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. ²⁶ "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17).

What does Jesus tell us about his divine mission? He says He came so we, who are sinners, might believe in Him, the Savior of sinners, so that we might, like Isaiah, could secure forgiveness of sins and become eternal sons and daughters of God's holy family. He came to take we who are imperfect because of sin we've inherited from Adam (Romans 5:12-21), and give us the option to be positionally perfect before Him. He came so that we, like Isaiah, could see His glory. But unlike Isaiah, He came so we could see His glory, His majesty for all eternity. Will it not be enough to stand in His throne room for a few thousand years, awed by He who is truly the glorious LORD of hosts? Indeed.

He came to give you all of this and so much more. This Christmas Eve, some 2,000 years after His prophesied birth, Jesus, the Lord of Glory, the Savior, the Redeemer, the divine Davidic King of Kings (Isaiah 9:6), looks for some of you to see your sin as Isaiah did and humbly seek it to be purged from your soul by turning in repentant faith to Him.

For others who have been purged, who know what it means to be His child, the question God posed to Isaiah still rings true today: Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Yes, who among us will step

forward and bravely say, "Lord, here I am. Send me as your witness to a people who desperately need to hear about your saving, cleansing power.

Will you be that man, that woman this Christmas? And Merry Christmas to you and yours for the Lord has come. Now, we must go out for Him.