

Isaiah 6: 1-8

“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. ² 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. ³ And they were calling to one another:

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

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “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.”

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

⁸ 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!”

On 8th September 2022, a prominent newspaper published tragic news on its front page, which reads, "Queen Elizabeth, the longest-reigning British monarch in history, has died. She was 96 years old." And I remember people were mourning over her death. For the next couple of weeks, Journalists were writing articles about life and accomplishments. Several theologians were reflecting on her life and drawing lessons from it. The world leaders mourned, and the nations grieved over her death. That was true in Israel, for in the eighth century, a king came to the throne in Jerusalem who began to reign at sixteen years of age. He reigned in Jerusalem for over fifty years—imagine it, over half of a century. He wasn't the most famous or the most important king of Jewish history, but he would certainly rank in

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the top five. His name was Uzziah, and what Uzziah accomplished in his reign was to bring the last significant spiritual reform to the people of the land. He died, incidentally, in disgrace, who violated his own principles of ethics and spirituality in the last year of his life.

In your Bible, you'll see that it says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple." If you look at your Bible, you see the word *lord*, and I'm sure it's spelled L-o-r-d. However, If you go down a couple of verses to the song of the seraphim, where it says, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty. Anytime you see L-O-R-D, you can be fairly confident that the Hebrew term that is being translated is the name Yahweh. Earlier, when we see the word *lord* (L-o-r-d), it translates to a different word, which is the Hebrew term *Adonai*. Now, the meaning of the term Adonai simply is this: the sovereign one. So do you see what's happened? The king is dead. There is this time of uncertainty and mourning in the land and the Jewish people. And Isaiah comes, in the name of his people, and he looks and beholds the interior parts of heaven itself, and he sees not Uzziah, not Hezekiah, not David. He sees Adonai, the supreme sovereign, enthroned in heaven. Many theologians believe, that what he is seeing here is a preincarnate glimpse of the enthronement of Christ Himself in His full majesty.

Now the scripture says the seraphim were covering the face and the feet with their wings, because the glory and majesty of God is beyond comprehension and nobody can face it without covering their eyes and covering the feet (shows humility and submission).

And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 "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."

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Holiness is the characteristic of God's nature that is at the very core of His being. Only as we encounter God in His holiness is it possible for us to see ourselves as we really are. The view of God presented in Isaiah 6:1-4 leaves an individual with a deep sense of awe at the greatness of His majesty. To be indifferent is impossible for the Christian when confronted by the holiness of God. In our fascination with God's love and mercy, we have lost sight of his majesty. In our excitement at God's approachability, we fail to sense his glorious power. Yes, we come to a loving God, but we forget he is a king. We have lost reverence for God. The God of the Bible evokes awe, and reverent worship is the proper response of his creatures. He is the Mighty One who speaks and summons the earth (Psalm 50:1). Humans owe him not a casual waving of the hand but a solemn bowing of the heart and knees in royal adoration. Nothing less will do.

German scholar Rudof Otto, in exploring this idea of God's holiness. Otto employed a Latin phrase in expressing this sense of the holy. He called it *mysterium tremendum*, which may be roughly translated as 'awful mystery.' God is a mystery, a being immensely different from his creatures, and we lack the words to accurately describe him. Along with this awareness of mystery is a sense of fear or dread that our encounter with God brings. Imagine Moses at the burning bush, or the Israelites at Mount Sinai, or Jacob after his vision of God at Bethel. That was also the impression the disciples got when they witnessed Jesus's glory on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-5).

"Holy, holy, holy." The seraphim's threefold repetition of this attribute is unique in Scripture, and it broke the Hebrew language. It is superlative beyond superlative. It is emphasis for which English lacks a fitting equivalent. To gaze upon God's thrice-holy face is to endure devastating humiliation. "Woe is me!" says Isaiah. "For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips." His evident anguish is unmistakable, and it is equally pressing for us. How can we, having uttered curses, slander, and blasphemy, audaciously approach the divine presence of God Almighty and worship Him? Only by undergoing cleansing can we gaze upon the face of God. Only if the blood-soaked coals from the altar touch our lips can we worship Him.

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Only if our sins are forgiven through righteous judgment, accomplished by the sacrificial lamb, we can only come to God. I was left with nothing but my sin and the mercy of a Judge who had no obligation to give it. God is under no compulsion to forgive my sins or redeem me. He would be perfectly just to condemn me. Instead, He sends His Spirit to replace the stone hearts of His people with hearts of flesh, awakening them to freely and gladly accept His Son's priesthood on their behalf. Just imagine we can come to the throne room and spend intimate time with him in prayer and adoration that even the highest heavenly powers don't dare to look upon this God.

Read carefully the next verse.

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!"

Isn't that the same call of God echoing even today? He is looking at His people and asking, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? Would you be able to answer Him like Isaiah "Here am I. Send me!" And one day, we will join all the saints and the seraphim in beholding and praising God's holiness.