



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 006: The Vision of Isaiah

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Read Isaiah, Chapter 6

Isaiah's call was arguably the most dramatic of all prophetic commissions that are recorded in Scripture, since Isaiah had a visionary encounter with the Lord in all his majesty. In this study is a series of questions about the text to think about, but if you may benefit from comparing your answers by reading a Bible Commentary or two.

v1 God on His Throne. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting high up, on a throne. What does this signify about the Lord?

v2 The Seraphim. Seraphim are angels serving at the throne of God. Why do you think they covered their faces?

v3 Holy, Holy, Holy! Some see this as a hint of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Another explanation is the use of the Hebrew practice of creating emphasis by repeating a word (for example *very large* might be rendered *large, large*). If emphasis is intended, why do you think is the significance of repeating "Holy" *three* times over?

v3 God's Glory. We sometimes speak of God's *heavenly* glory. Where else is his glory to be found when he is near, according to the Seraphim?

v5 Isaiah's Reaction. How did Isaiah feel about himself in the light of the Lord's holy majesty?

vv 6-7 Cleansed from Sin. Isaiah was especially conscious of his unworthy speech, so it was his mouth (lips) that was selected in purging him from sin. Why do you think coal from the altar was used for this? (The statement *Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged* is what is called a *performative utterance*, meaning a statement that brings something into being. A modern example of this is in the wedding service when the performing minister says "I now pronounce you man and wife;" by the utterance of these words the two become married.)

v8 The call and Isaiah's Response. Notice the Lord did not force Isaiah to work for him. He wants willing workers, not enforced labour. What was Isaiah's response to this call? If we were to follow Isaiah's example, what should be our response to God's Word?

vv 9-10 The Task. God prepared Isaiah for the apathetic response to his ministry that he must expect. This does not mean that God did not want the message of Isaiah to be beyond understanding or to make people turn further away from him. It was a warning that, by rejecting the message that should bring greater understanding, the hearers would be driven into confusion and resist further revelation. This also happened in the ministry of Jesus (see Matthew 13:10-15). What does this tell us about *our* response to the Word of God?

vv 11-13 The Result. Isaiah prophesied for about 40 years, with seemingly little result. His faithful ministry was vindicated in a future generation who saw his prophecies come to pass.

To think about: What can we learn from Isaiah's faithful ministry in the light of the poor response he received?

To dig deeper: Read a Bible Commentary on Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 6:11-3 and perhaps a Bible Dictionary account of the Exile and Restoration.