

THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

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Isaiah 6

¹In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ²Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. ⁴And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵Then said I, 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 mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. ⁶Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. ⁸Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

⁹And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ¹⁰Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. ¹¹Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, ¹²And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land. ¹³But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and *it* shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof. **KJV**

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the LORD. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled the temple. ² Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, ³ as they shouted,

“Holy, holy, holy,
LORD All-Powerful!
The earth is filled
with your glory.”

⁴ As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then I cried out, “I’m doomed! Everything I say

is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful.”

⁶ One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. ⁷ It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, “This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty.”

⁸ After this, I heard the LORD ask, “Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?”

“I’ll go,” I answered. “Send me!”

⁹ Then the LORD told me to go and speak this message to the people:

“You will listen and listen,

but never understand.

You will look and look,

but never see.”

The LORD also said,

¹⁰ “Make these people stubborn!

Make them stop up

their ears,

cover their eyes,

and fail to understand.

Don’t let them turn to me

and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I asked the LORD, “How long will this last?”

The LORD answered:

Until their towns are destroyed and their houses are deserted, until their fields are empty, ¹² and I have sent them far away, leaving their land in ruins. ¹³ If only a tenth of the people are left, even they will be destroyed. But just as stumps remain after trees have been cut down, some of my chosen ones will be left.

Contemporary English Version

King Uzziah had been, in many respects, a great king. In 2 Chr. 26:5, the Bible says, “as long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.” However his growing military power made him proud, and Uzziah turned from God, and was struck with leprosy. 2 Chr. 26 ¹⁶But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. ¹⁷And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were* valiant men: ¹⁸And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God. ¹⁹Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. ²⁰And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because

the LORD had smitten him. ²¹And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

We are not sure of Isaiah's relationship to Uzziah, but apparently he was a strong supporter of this king, despite Uzziah's later problem. King Uzziah had died and in the year of Uzziah's death, young Isaiah went into the Temple of the Lord, and, although he too was a sinful man, instead of being struck with leprosy, he was struck with the holiness of God. We are told that the year was 739 B.C., the twelfth year of Jotham's coregency, and three years after the death of Israel's great king, Jeroboam II. According to some, this may have been the same year in which, Rome was founded! In Judah it was the year King Uzziah died; and for Isaiah, it was the year in which he saw the Lord.

One commentary says that these events were turning points for both Judah and Isaiah. "For Judah, Uzziah's death marked the beginning of the end of peace and prosperity. Assyria had begun to expand westward. Israel joined with Syria to stave off an attack and then tried to force Judah into a coalition with them against Assyria. Judah refused to go along, so Israel and Syria attempted to replace Judah's king with a man of their own choosing. Finally, King Ahaz of Judah called on Assyria for support against his two local enemies, only to find himself threatened by this voracious helper. Ultimately, Israel became a puppet state and then suffered complete destruction (722 B.C.), and Judah was left exposed on her northern and western flanks. In 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar would conquer Jerusalem, and destroy the city, the temple, and everything of value in the city of Jerusalem."

Unlike his mentor, Uzziah, Isaiah went to the Temple in humility. There he had a vision of another King.

The Zondervan Reference Commentary tells us that Isaiah had "a vision of the almighty King when an earthly reign of over fifty years had come – or was coming – to its end."

The Assyrian Empire is no more; the Babylonian Empire is no more; the Greek Empire is no more; and the Mighty Roman Empire is no more. But that vision of Isaiah is with us today and strengthens us in a time of great economic and moral weakness in our own beloved nation. Whenever I think of the problems in our nation, I inevitably think of this great Vision of Isaiah – and I think of the statement of the English people when a monarch died and another was immediately installed – The King is dead; long live the King; His Kingdom is Forever!

I. IN THE TEMPLE THAT DAY, ISAIAH HAD A VISION OF THE REAL KING!

A. ISAIAH SAW THE KING'S GLORY! One interpreter writes, "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**."

1. He was Seated on a Throne. He was the real King of Israel. He is the Covenant making God who made a Covenant with Adam and Eve in the garden; who made a covenant with Abraham before he left his fathers house, his country, his people, and his possessions, and journeyed to a land that he did not know, because the King had spoken;

who made a covenant with Noah for the saving of humanity and the animal order; who made a covenant with Moses to lead His people into the land of promise, reminding them that He was a Holy God and that they must be Holy to gain His blessings; a God and King who covenanted with David, and promised him that his Davidic Kingdom would not end when he died, but would last forever and forever; who during the last supper in the Upper Room said to the disciples, Lk. 22:20 "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.** "This is the new covenant (testament) in my blood. As oft as you drink it you do show forth the Lord's death till he come." He was simply telling these weary disciples, these despairing disciples, these dispirited disciples, that He was the fulfillment of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's prophesy of a "New Covenant" where the laws would be written upon the heart, and the Lord would be glorified by His people keeping those laws.

I remind you that when Isaiah saw the Lord, he was speaking about the same Lord that appeared to Moses in the burning bush, the very same. In Hebrew, the word Lord refers to Yahweh, or Jehovah. Because the Jews considered God's name holy, they just said adonai, which referred to the Lord, or to King Jesus! When we confess that Jesus is Lord, we are confessing that He is the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, and present with His people forevermore.

2. God's being "high and exalted" symbolized His position before the nation. They had lost Uzziah their monarch for 50 years; they were spiraling downward economically and militarily; Tiglath Pileser and the mighty Assyrian Army was attacking them from the West; but the Lord was still their King, and though their strength might fail, His strength would never fail. Remember Luther's magnificent hymn:

"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.
Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.
And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.
That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever."

3. His train filled the Temple. Someone said: “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.” One is reminded by this how that God filled the Temple in Jerusalem with such great glory when Solomon dedicated it with the fanfare of trumpets, lyres, flutes, and other musical instruments, so that the priests could not perform their services for the presence of the Glory of God. We need to get out of God’s way, and behold His magnificent glory. Wasn’t it Habbakuk who said, “God is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silent before Him.” Remember too how that on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Voice of God spoke to the nervous disciples, “This is my beloved Son, Hear Him!”

In another picture of glory, Isaiah says, 9: ⁶For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Isaiah saw the King in His glory; later Isaiah would give us another picture of the King.

B. THE KING IN HIS HUMILITY.

¹Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? ²For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him. ³He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. ⁸He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ⁹And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he

shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

James Stewart of Scotland has said that Jesus took the cross and made it His throne, and took the thorns and made them a kingly crown.

In the temple that day, Isaiah had a vision of the REAL KING!

II. THAT VISION OF THE KING GAVE ISAIAH A TRUE VISION OF THE KINGDOM OF MAN

A. ISAIAH'S VISION OF GOD GAVE HIM A REAL VISION OF HIMSELF.

He saw himself as he truly was. God's Kingdom is quite different than our little kingdoms. We are sinners. Before we can enter God's Kingdom we must Repent of our sin. We cannot repent of our sins until we see that we are sinners. To realize that we must recognize how we stand before a Holy and Righteous King whose Kingdom is characterized by the perfection of holiness. He saw the King; He saw the fiery ones, the seraphim; he heard them sing of God's holiness, God's perfect, 3-fold holiness; he felt the trembling and shaking of the great temple; he noticed the Searphim covering themselves before the holiness of God; and he saw the cloud of smoke, the shekinah cloud, that filled the temple; and Isaiah, to say the very least, was afraid. He was shaken more than the temple. Listen to his cry, "⁵Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips..." His kingdom had just crashed...with Uzziah's death and with this vision. What was he to do? Nothing was left but confession of weakness, vulnerability, and sin. "Woe, woe, woe...I am a sinner before an Awesome God...I am a sinner in the hands of a God who hates sin." Listen! "⁶Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." What good news! What magnificent news! Your sins are forgiven; your sins are purged; your sins are taken away! I remember that moment in my life and I know that you do too. At that moment Isaiah became a born-again citizen of a new Kingdom. Though the earthly king was dead; Long Liveth the King of Heaven and of Earth! Isaiah's Kingdom was a political kingdom, bound by the powers of the earth.

B. ISAIAH RECOGNIZED ALSO THAT ALL MEN WERE SINNERS.

Listen: "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 mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." When Isaiah saw the Real King he saw his real self, and he saw the real condition of humanity. He saw the Kingdom of Humanity. Men are sinners. They know that. Yet it takes the Truth of God to cause them to admit their sinfulness. Sometimes they confess it in other ways, like Lord Byron the poet who wrote:

My days are in the yellow leaf-
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief

Are mine alone.”

Prime Minister, Disraeli, wrote, “Youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age a regret.”

Napoleon said, “Great men are meteors that consume themselves to light the earth. This is my burnt out hour.”

Paul shows us clearly the kingdom of man in Romans 1:

¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ²⁵Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

²⁶For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³²Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. “

III. ISAIAH, THANK GOD, HAD A VISION OF THE DIVINE KINGDOM.

A. ONCE ISAIAH HAD SEEN THE KING, SEEN HIMSELF, SEEN THE SINFUL NATION, SEEN HIS SINS FORGIVEN, HE HEARD THE KING SPEAK!

God did not speak to Isaiah, but Isaiah heard Him speak, and it seemed to Isaiah as if it were directly for him. But God was speaking to the Trinity perhaps, or to the Divine

Council, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us.” In a sermon entitled “Seeing the Invisible” James Stewart of Scotland uses Isaiah as one of his examples. He writes: “So now I give you a 3rd picture. Take Isaiah. Take the experience that turned Isaiah into a prophet. He began as a young courtier at the royal court, complacent and content. On the throne of Judah sat Uzziah, the greatest monarch the land had seen since Solomon. And the young courtier was carefree and secure, absorbed in the duties of his immediate environment, fascinated by the material splendours all around him, quite sure that this wealth and glory and stability were bound to last for ever.”

“But there came a day when the sunshine of that splendour was suddenly veiled and shrouded. A strange rumour went throughout the land. Men stopped one another in the streets and spoke of it in whispers. Have you heard? Our great Uzziah! He is struck down with leprosy. How are the mighty fallen! The king—a leper! And then, as though that shadow across the nation’s sky were not darkness enough, out of the east came looming like a gigantic thundercloud the baleful spectre of Assyria. Then, suddenly, the deepening of the crisis, the news flying round the capital – ‘The king is dead! The Assyrian is at the gates!...In that bitter hour, his steps led him – he hardly knew why – to the precincts of the temple. It is a good place for any disillusioned heart...In that day...I found there a whole world I had been ignoring. My blindness was pierced, my darkness scattered. I saw the Lord! And from that moment the badly shattered, disillusioned, young courtier was a man inspired, reaching out eager arms of dedication towards that world unseen: ‘Here am I, Lord, Here am I – send me!’”

B. ISAIAH’S ANSWER — “Here am I, Lord, send me!”

God’s Kingdom, Isaiah learned, is not just Israel or Judah. God’s Kingdom is the entire world. This was surely a lesson to Isaiah about the Kingdom of God. Like most of his colleagues, he believed that Israel and Judah were the only ones that the Lord truly cared about. How wrong he was. God’s Kingdom was for all humanity, even for the hated Gentile ‘dogs.’ We sometimes think that the Kingdom is only in our little parish, in our own little church, in our own little town. We forget that God is King over all the earth; a lesson that most of the Jews did not get until they were later, in 586, taken into captivity in Babylon, and realized that even there they could worship God the Lord of all the earth.

Matt. 28:¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.** ¹⁹**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:** ²⁰**Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

We find these words in John 20: ²⁰And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. ²¹Then said Jesus to them again, **Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.**”

IV. ISAIAH HAD A VISION OF THE LORD, OF HIMSELF, OF THE HUMAN KINGDOM, AND OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. HE ALSO HAD A VISION OF HIS TASK.

A. A DIFFICULT TASK.

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 would not listen now, and why should they? They had not listened before. The King did not want to discipline his subjects, but all the covenants demanded obedience. **ISAIAH WAS CALLED TO BE A FAILURE.** The people would not listen, but would become more stubborn, more hardened, more rebellious, more ungodly, upon hearing Isaiah's message.

Our task as the proclaimers of the Good News is just that...we proclaim. We cannot cajole people into believing; we cannot force people into faith; we cannot get them to make facile claims to believe unless they also repent; we cannot get most of them any closer to God than they want to get. We start our task in failure, just like Isaiah; and it will end in failure, just like Isaiah.

Someone said: The Apostle Paul failed; Peter failed; every one of the twelve apostles failed. David, Israel's greatest king, "a man after God's own heart," failed. Moses, giant among the Israelites, giver of the law, deliverer of his people, failed. Jacob, father of Israel, failed; Isaac, son of promise, failed. Abraham, progenitor of Israel, father of the faithful, prototype of those who are righteous through faith, failed. Even our first parents, in their human perfection, failed.

Who has not failed?

It is not failing that is the problem; it is what one does after he has failed. To take failure as final is to be a failure. To see in failure the school of the Spirit is to let failure contribute to one's growth in Christ.

And, oh, by the way, Christ also failed. He was executed as a criminal by the most shameful method, crucifixion, between two felons, on a barren hillside outside Jerusalem. He was a King, and should have been entombed inside the city where the other members of Davids' line were entombed, but was confined to a borrowed tomb. But He succeeded in death to defeat Satan, and in three days, **HE AROSE!**

B. A GLORIOUS TASK.

We are failures in the eyes of the world; for the world counts success in a different way than does the King of Heaven. From what he told Isaiah, success was faithfulness to the task...to go; and Jesus reminds us that our faithfulness to the task of the Kingdom is to go, to teach Jesus' Word, to disciple, to baptize. That is a hard task indeed, but it is glorious Good News that we have. Our Gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom. Our King is our Commander and our Example. In Mark 1 we find these words: ⁴Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵And saying, **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**"

The Kingdom of God is in every believer whose loyalty is to the King. His Kingdom has always been in Heaven, His Kingdom was prophesied to come in the Old

Testament, His Kingdom has come with the birth, life, death and resurrection and ascension of the King of Glory, and be assured, without any doubt, He will come again.

We have been given a glorious task, a hard task, an impossible task, and we are to be faithful to that task. Have you heard the story of Polycarp, probably one of John's disciples? Fifty years after John had written his book, there was a frightful time of martyrdom in Smyrna during the procounselship of Statius Quadratus. Polycarp was brought to trial by the authorities and told, "You are to renounce your faith! You are to curse the Name of Christ!" (The Romans had found that no real Christian would renounce their faith, especially if it meant cursing the name of Christ.) Polycarp answered, "Four score and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong: how then can I revile my King, my Savior?" The authorities took Polycarp into the amphitheatre and burned him to death. But the young church of Smyrna hurled its defiance in the very face of his murderers; for when it later wrote in the annals of the church what had happened, it was very careful to put in the precise date, and it gave it thus – "Polycarp was martyred, Status Quadratus being procounsul of Asia, and Jesus Christ being King for ever!"

You have Good News to preach – a King, a Kingdom, and Jesus, the Way the Truth and the Life!