

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 6:1–13 (NIV)

¹ 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. ² Above him were seraphs, 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 seraphs 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!”

⁹ He said, “Go and tell this people:

“Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “For how long, O Lord?” And he answered:

“Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged,

¹² until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken.

¹³ And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

FOR REFLECTION

In these verses, Isaiah has a life-changing encounter with the living God. In many respects his entire ministry as a prophet begins here. An encounter with God can produce a seismic shift in a person's self-concept, priorities, value system, and views of wealth, time, and even safety. Immediately after this experience, Isaiah embarks on a career that has no prospects for success or material reward, yet he still takes it on. Is he out of touch with reality? Or is he more in touch with reality than we are?

1. Verses 1 – 3 describe Isaiah's vision of God. What do you see as the vision's central message? What is happening? (Hint: Seraphs are angels. The covering of their faces and feet is likely an expression of reverential deference.)
2. Verses 4 – 5 describe Isaiah's response. What is his initial reaction? Why do you think he responded this way? What has changed about the way he sees himself? Have you ever had a similar response to God?
3. In verses 6 – 7, how does God respond to Isaiah? Given the scene Isaiah has witnessed, did this surprise you?
4. Verses 8 – 13 describe Isaiah's response to all that has happened. What lies at the heart of his response? Why do you think he responded this way, even though God commissions him to deliver a very difficult message?
5. How might the reality of who God is change you and the direction of your life?