

“My Eyes Have Seen the King”

by Bryan Gibson

“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” (Isaiah 6:5).

What exactly did Isaiah see? He “saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). I’ve seen some impressive trains before, particularly on wedding gowns, but nothing that could fill the dimensions of the temple. Above this elevated throne he saw “seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew” (Isaiah 6:2). Even more significant is what he **heard**, from one of the seraphim, in a voice so loud that “the posts of the door were shaken”: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3-4).

Can you see now why Isaiah reacted the way he did? Isaiah couldn’t bear what he saw in himself, and in his people, because of what he saw in God. In some measure, Isaiah could now see himself the way the Lord saw him, and he knew he was in trouble.

But then a wonderful thing happened: “One of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged’” (Isaiah 6:7). What a relief this must have been to Isaiah, to feel that heavy weight of sin, and to now have it removed. Not just relieved, but also deeply grateful.

And perhaps that explains Isaiah’s eager reply to the Lord’s request. “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” (Isaiah 6:8). Isaiah was eager to do whatever the Lord asked, yes, because of who He is, but also because of what He had done for Isaiah. Isaiah had been forgiven, and He was happy to do whatever the Forgiver asked.

What exactly did the Lord send him to do? Preach to people who won’t listen, and keep on doing it until they’ve received their just punishment (Isaiah 6:9-12). No easy task, to say the least, but Isaiah made a commitment to the Lord, and he honored it.

The details may be different, but I’ve experienced the same things Isaiah did, at least in principle. I, too, was once “undone,” “a man of unclean lips.” I understood the awfulness of my sin, because “my eyes have seen the King,” not in a vision, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I felt the full burden of my sin, but thanks be to God, my sins were cleansed by the blood of Christ, when I obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:37-38). And so when the Lord asks, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” my eager reply is, “Here am I, send me.” No way I’m saying no to the King, especially a King who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20), a King who cleansed me from all my “old sins” (2 Peter 1:9), a King who enables me to come into His holy presence (Hebrews 10:19-22). His presence is no longer “filled with smoke” (Isaiah 6:4); in fact, my hope is that one day I “shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).