**The Holiness of God: The Trauma of Holiness, Part 1**

**Isaiah 6:1-4**

America has witnessed the loss of several presidents, chief executives who died too early. When men like Abraham Lincoln or JFK died, the nation experienced a time of solemn, serious trauma.

**The Death of King Uzziah**

What was true in America was also true in Israel. In the eighth century, Uzziah, one of the top five kings of Judah died after reigning for over fifty years. He began his reign at age 16. He was the last king to bring the last significant spiritual reform to the people of Judah.

He died in disgrace, because he violated his own principles of ethics and spirituality in the last year of his life. When he died, however, it signaled a turning point in Jewish history. From that day on the spiritual life and vibrancy of the Jewish nation went into a serious decline from which it never recovered. Four years after Uzziah died the city of Rome was founded and a cultural change took place that would shape the whole future destiny of history.

Amid this struggle, Isaiah was called as a prophet. He is regarded as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament and a great statesman. He was the prophet who said that someday in the future a virgin would conceive and bring forth a child, and His name would be called Immanuel. He was the prophet who said that in the future the Servant of the Lord would come and bear the sins of His people. The record of his call to the role of the prophet is found in 6:1-4.

So, in this year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah was ushered into heaven, into the throne room of God.

**I Saw the Lord**

Two different Hebrew words are behind of the word “lord” in this text.

Anytime you see L-O-R-D, the Hebrew term “Yahweh” is being translated. Yahweh is the name that God revealed to Moses in the Midianite wilderness in Exodus 3:14 when He said, “I AM WHO I AM”. Yahweh is the sacred name of God, the holy name of God. Earlier when we see (L-o-r-d), it translates the Hebrew term “Adonai” which means “the sovereign One.” This is probably the most exalted title that the Old Testament uses for God. This is the supreme title that is given to Him. Psalm 8, 110

What is happening here is this: The king is dead. Uncertainty and mourning have gripped the Jewish people. Isaiah comes, in the name of his people, and he beholds the interior parts of heaven itself, and he sees enthroned in heaven a preincarnate glimpse of the enthronement of Christ Himself in His full majesty.

**The Train of His Robe Filled the Temple**

In ancient days the clothing of monarchs was a measure of their status. An international protocol would respond to the various levels of the magnificence of their clothes. If a king wore sable, that was the best; if he wore ermine, that was incredible. Mink was second or third grade level. Those that came with canvas robes had to sit in the back of the summit meetings of the kings.

**The Seraphim**

This is the only reference in Scripture to these creatures. They are part of the heavenly host created by God to serve Him day and night in His immediate presence. Isaiah’s description of them is bizarre to say the least, for we are told that they had six wings.

When God creates creatures, He does it with a certain creative economy. He doesn’t waste material. He has an amazing, extraordinary ability to create whatever He makes so that it is adaptable and suitable for its environment.

When He creates angelic beings, whose specific task and function is to minister to Him in His immediate presence, He constructs them to fit their environment. And hence we are told they are given two extra sets of wings.

**They Covered Their Faces**

The seraphim minister every moment in the immediate, unveiled presence of Almighty God whose glory is so refulgent, so piercing that even the angels must shield themselves from looking directly at His face. The narrative of Moses on Mt. Sinai who got a one second glimpse of God’s back and not His face shows us why the seraphim cannot look at God’s face. If they, like humans, looked at God’s face, they would die.

This why the seraphim have an one extra set of wings—to shield their eyes from looking at God’s face.

**They Covered Their Feet**

The Bible does not say why the seraphim cover their feet with the other extra set of wings, but a good guess is because the feet, for angels as well as for men, is the symbol in the Bible of creatureliness.

We are told that we are of the earth, earthy, that our feet are of clay. When Moses met God in the desert and wilderness of Midian, God asked Moses to bare his feet, the sign of his creatureliness, of being common and profane. By baring his feet, Moses was submitting to God. He was in submission before the Holy One. (Exodus 3:5) So, even in heaven the angels cover the sign of their creatureliness.

**Holy, Holy, Holy**

What is more important in this text is not the structure of the angels—it’s the message of the angels: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.”

In the English language, when we want to emphasize something in print, we underline words, italicize them, put them in boldface type, put little quotation marks or brackets around them, or fill the page with exclamation points.

The Jews used these techniques, but they also had another technique--the simple technique of verbal repetition.

The apostle Paul used this technique in Galatians 1:8-9. Jesus used it when He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you,” or “Verily, verily, I say to you.” What He said was, “Amen, amen I say unto you.”

We say “Amen” after the teacher teaches or after the preacher preaches, and it means, “It is true, we believe it,” and so on. Jesus didn’t wait for His disciples to confirm the truthfulness of what He was saying. He started His sermon by saying, “Amen, amen.” That’s like the captain of a ship getting on the intercom and saying, “Now hear this. This is the captain speaking.” When Jesus repeated that word, He was underscoring its importance.

There is only one attribute, one characteristic of God that is ever raised to the third degree, or superlative degree, of repetition in Scripture. The Bible doesn’t simply say that God is holy, or even that He’s holy, holy, but that He is *holy, holy, holy.* This is a dimension of God that consumes His very essence, and when it is shown to Isaiah, we read in v 4 that the inanimate, lifeless, unintelligible parts of creation in the presence of the manifestation of the holiness of God was moved. How can we, made in His image, be indifferent or apathetic to His majesty?