

# Humble Isaiah

## Introduction

Humility is less admired than it once was. Generation Y is now all about me, me, me. Sunday Times article says the latest generation of graduates – the Y generation - shows the most traits of self-absorption. Generation X were loyal of you treated them right. Generation Y, go where the money is!

We do not live in a universe that revolves around us and God has to fit in with our plans. We live in His world, revolving around His plans and purposes.

Genuine worship and service of God originates in humility. The Prophet Isaiah we shown something of holiness of God, and it so humbled him that he became the willing messenger God wanted him to be. We can learn from his humble attitude.

Isaiah 6:1-4 *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'* <sup>4</sup> *At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.* Isaiah was in the Court of Solomon's Temple when he had this amazing vision. This used to be filled with men praying but no longer. People were too busy to pray. They had no time for the Lord. Even when the King had died no one turned to the Lord.

Since coming to the Throne at the age of 16, King Uzziah had done much for Judah. Instructed by the prophet Zechariah, he had done great things. He strengthened Jerusalem and had an army of 307,000 men. But in the last years of his life he had abandoned God and promoted pluralism. God's law was disobeyed and there was corruption in the government. Uzziah had been struck down by leprosy and forced to live in seclusion.

Isaiah was overwhelmed by this vision of God. He was terrified. In this vision the Lord was seated for judgement upon a throne. He was high and exalted, ruling with absolute power. Even when seated his robe completely

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filled the temple, ort than 9 meters high. This was the Lord and judge of the earth in magnificent splendour. The heavenly choir was so deafening that the whole place shook. **Isaiah was given a fresh sense of God’s holiness.**

Today at this very moment the Seraphim are worshiping God and doing his bidding.

John 12:40-41 *“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.”*<sup>41</sup> *Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.* John quotes from Isaiah 6 and says that Isaiah saw Jesus’ glory. Isaiah saw the person of the Lord Jesus. The vision motivated Isaiah to preach.

The gospel declares that Jesus is returning to Judge the world. Romans 2:16 says *This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.* When we preach that Jesus is Lord, we also need to preach that He is coming back to judge the world. This will be a terrifying time. In Matthew 3:7 Jesus taught about the coming judgement.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:11 *Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.* A fresh sense of the holiness of God will remind us of who will examine our lives and Judge the sins of these un-forgiven. If we don’t teach about this judgement to come, we are not telling people the truth, nor giving them the best reason for turning to Christ.

If we don’t tell people then who will? The devil will tell the same old lies – you wont surely die! The world will say everything will go on as it always does?

The good news is that Jesus swapped places with us on the cross because he loves us and doesn’t want us to face this coming judgement. Without hearing the bad news, the good news will not sound so fantastic.

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Isaiah realised how Holy God was and how sinful he was and he humbled himself before the Lord and was willing to preach the message of judgement to the people. The courage that Isaiah had to talk to his nation came from this encounter.

Humble willingness to preach the gospel begins as we encounter Jesus and seeing how holy God is. The courage that we need will come as we encounter Jesus and see how Holy he is.

Isaiah 6:5 *‘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.’* Having seen the holiness of God, Isaiah was well aware of his own sin. He confessed his uncleanness and moral corruption and that of his nation. The nation had turned from God to idol worship. So often people worship other things than the living God. The favourite idol we serve is our own image, and sometimes worship with great devotion.

Isaiah realised that he was a sinner in the presence of a Holy righteous God. He cried out ***I am ruined!*** He was overcome with a sense of guilt and judgement before the holiness of God. He knew that his uncleanness deserved judgement and he could not survive in the presence of the Lord.

Isaiah 6:5-7 *Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’* Isaiah was now ready to hear the good news! He was given a fresh sense of forgiveness. Now he could be forgiven. As the Seraph touched a red-hot coal on his mouth the words were spoken ***your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.*** His sin, as bad as it was, had been pardoned. The coal had touched his lips directly, the place of his deepest awareness of sin. He was no longer guilty before God. Isaiah had done nothing in this process; God had initiated everything. This truth he received was the only hope for his people. Israel’s only hope from judgement was to be cleansed from their sin.

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The live coal from the altar symbolises the sacrifices made there, which, in turn, prefigure the sacrifice the sacrifice of Jesus Christ made on the cross. That day Jesus satisfied the Father by suffering the penalty we deserved.

Isaiah 53:5-6 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Jesus came to our world, swapping places with us. He gave His life in our place on the cross.

Isaiah 53:8-9 *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!’ <sup>9</sup> He said, ‘Go and tell this people:’ “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.” <sup>10</sup> 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.’* Isaiah was aware that he had been forgiven by the provision of sacrifice to cleanse his sins. He was now willing to serve the living God. But the vision wasn't finished. When Isaiah heard God asking a question who will go for us he offered to go. Isaiah was given an awful message of judgement, but also hope beyond judgement.

Jesus used these same words in the gospel of Mark 4:9-12 as Isaiah was commissioned by God, pronouncing God's judgment on the world.

Isaiah got up a new man. From then on he talked about the holiness of God, His just punishment of sin, and His gracious mercy in providing the sacrifice necessary to ransom sinners from hell. The gospel message we need to preach is to recognise God's holiness, confessing sin, and receiving cleansing is for all who wish to be saved today.

We are called to Worship and serve Him and become His prophets of the gospel of cleansing through Jesus' sacrifice. We need to be humbled by God

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like Isaiah.

## Personal Study Questions

- + What was so overwhelming for Isaiah about the vision of God?
- + How sinful do we think we really are?
- + How guilty are we now before God?
- + Why was Isaiah suddenly so willing to preach the gospel?