



Handout for the week of 2/4/19 Luke 5: 1-11 & Is. 6: 1-8

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Is. 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. 2 Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one called unto another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. 4 And the posts of the door were moved at the voice of them that called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then 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. 6 Then flew unto me one of the seraphim,

with a glowing stone in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; 7 and he touched my mouth with it, and said: Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin expiated. 8 And 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.'

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| c. 931-722 | writing of much biblical text Early prophets (Amos) | Solomon's kingdom divided: North, Israel; South, Judah 722 Assyrians conquer Israel | * North Africa: founding of Carthage by Phoenicians * Greece: first Olympic Games; Homeric epics * Italy: founding of Rome |
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COMMENTARY:

Isaiah's prophetic career was enmeshed in the political and cultural turmoil of the times. According to the superscription to the book, this career spanned the last half century of the eighth century B.C.E. -including all or part of the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah (769 -733), Jotham (758-743, regent), Ahaz (743-733 B.C.E., regent; 733-727 B.C.E.), and Hezekiah (727-698 B.C.E.). According to the date provided in Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah experienced an awesome vision of the Lord in the year that King Uzziah died (733 B.C.E.). If this experience was his commission to divine service, then his prophetic career began with the death of the monarch. Alternatively, the vision marks a renewal or redirection of his prophetic career begun sometime earlier (and not otherwise indicated).

And yet at the same time the Bible is insistent that God is not visible. It is true that occasionally people see God (e.g., Exodus 24:9, Isaiah 6:1), but such passages are rare, and the general idea seems to be that normal, living people cannot see God. Even Moses was not allowed to see God, "for no man can see me while living" (Exodus 33:20). The Israelites are reminded that "when God spoke to you on Horeb out of the fire you saw no form; so take care not to relapse and make yourselves any idol in representational form, a carving whether male or female; a carving of any animal on the ground or of any winged bird that flies in the sky; a carving of anything that creeps on the ground or of any fish in the water underground; and not to look upwards to the sky and see the sun and moon and stars like an army in the sky, and abase yourselves and worship and serve them." (Deuteronomy 4:15-19, alluding to Exodus 20:3-5, ct. Deuteronomy 5:7)