

Isaiah Study 2 Class Notes

Analysis of the text

1 And it came to pass in the year in which king Uzziah died, that...

*By stating official date of this occurrence was used on contract documents to verify a report.

...I saw the Lord

Few can say they have seen the Lord, Moses, Jacob, Micaiah, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Stephen, Paul, John.

“Jesus said, “Am I so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? [Jn. 14:9-10]

- ❖ The glory of God is the way He makes Himself known to us (Moses sees God’s “back”), allowed by God and is known as His “energies”, His working and the face of God is the Divine essence, the mystery of His existence, into which no one is able to glimpse (FR. Eugene Pentiuic: Jesus the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible).”

The Glory of God (Pentiuic)

- ❖ It means God’s presence (Ex 33:18-23)
- ❖ A brilliant light that needs no storm (Ex. 19:16)
- ❖ It leaves its glow on the face of Moses (Ex 34:29)
- ❖ It may appear in a cloud, inside and outside the tent (Lev. 9:23)
- ❖ During the wandering in the wilderness (I Kings 8:10-11)
- ❖ Inside the Temple built by Solomon (I Kings 8:10-11)
- ❖ A consuming fire ((Ex. 24:17)
- ❖ The entire people in the wilderness (not just Moses and Aaron) beheld the glory of God. (Lev. 9:23)
- ❖ All of these foreshadow the time when the Messiah would be incarnated when the Divine glory would dwell in human flesh.

sitting on a throne *high and lifted up*, and the Temple was full of his glory

- ❖ Isaiah was standing in the Holy Place, (the Nave of the Church). The Holy of Holies was the most sacred part of the Temple it is lifted up and reserved for God and the Ark of covenant. The two areas were separated by a veil.
- ❖ The ***throne high and lifted up*** was the “mercy-seat” which was the cover of the Ark, flanked by two wooden figures of cherubim plated with gold and attached to the Ark.
- ❖ The Lord was seated upon the Ark of covenant

2 And seraphs (burning ones) stood round about him: each one had six wings: and with two they covered their face, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one cried to the other, and they said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

“This majestic hymn focuses on the paradox of God’s personality. On the one hand, God is holy, namely, transcendental, separated from the earthly realm; his face hidden beyond the veil, cannot be seen. The fathers

interpreted the “thrice-holy hymn” as pointing to the Trinity. On the other hand, the hymn underscores God’s active presence in the world. God’s “glory” filling the earth is a reflection of God’s willingness to come closer to the human person, to tabernacle among humans (Pentiuć).”

In the Incarnation, God’s glory is made accessible to the human eye. “Glory” refers to two messianic features: *“And the Logos became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14).”*

- a.) His eternal generation from the Father
- b.) The communion of love and trustworthiness between God the Father and the Messiah

*Isaiah is prophetically speaking of the pre-existent Messiah. (Pentiuć)

4And the lintel shook at the voice they uttered, and the house was filled with smoke. **5** And I said, Woe is me, for I am pricked to the heart; for being a man, and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people having unclean lips; and I have seen with mine eyes the King, the Lord of hosts. **6**And there was sent to me one of the seraphs, and he had in his hand a coal, which he had taken off the altar with the tongs: **7** and he touched my mouth, and said, Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven. **8** And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go to this people? And I said, behold, I am here, send me. And he said, Go, and say to this people...

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverbs 9:10).”

Only through cleansing can we hear the Voice of God

- ❖ No one is worthy/clean/capable! Holiness reveals our unworthiness
- ❖ Guilt – objective condition of sin/brokenness
- ❖ The veil is removed through humility and now the ability to overhear now possible – divine council
- ❖ All of life: God speaks, we hear & respond
- ❖ Cleansing of Isaiah – coal from incense burner that purges: forgiveness; prayer of priest after receiving Eucharist; prayer before receiving
- ❖ God intentionally asks an open question as an invitation

The Perplexing Mission given to Isaiah

9 You shall hear indeed, but you shall not understand; and you shall see indeed, but you shall not perceive. **10** For the heart of this people has become dull, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. **11** And I said, How long, O Lord? (He knows this is not an eternal thing) And he said, Until cities be deserted by reason of their not being inhabited, and the houses by reason of there being no men, and the land shall be left desolate.

Was this directed at the Northern Kingdom – Israel; Or, the Post-Exile and Abandonment of Judah?

“The mandate Isaiah receives is fraught with an appalling contradiction. He is told to be a prophet in order to thwart and to defeat the essential purpose of being a prophet...It is generally assumed that the mission of a prophet is to open the people’s hearts, to enhance their understanding...to bring about their turning to God rather than to prevent it...I have a hypothesis: that this perplexing prophecy can be understood only if it be applied to the Northern Kingdom...they are already afflicted by a lack of sensitivity...The opposite of freedom is...hardness of heart. (Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets, An Introduction*).”

“But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they kept on not believing in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, “Lord, who believed our report? And to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?” (Isa. 53:1) On this account they were not able to believe, because Isaiah said again, “He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes and understand with their heart and should be converted; and I shall heal them. (Isa. 6”10)” These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spoke concerning Him. [Jn. 12:37-40]

12 And after this God shall remove the men far off, and they that are left upon the land shall be multiplied. 13 And yet there shall be a tenth upon it, and again it shall be for a spoil, as a turpentine tree, and as an acorn when it falls out of its husk.

❖ This points to the remnant but it shall be burned again– one tenth, Judah one of the 10 tribes

II. The Temple vision is not bound by space and time- the Eternal Liturgy is manifested

The Trisagion Hymn (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us (3). Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever and unto the ages of ages amen. Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (Again Fervently!) Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (Thrice-holy Hymn sung before the readings in the liturgy)

After “Again fervently!” the Priest moves towards the Prothesis table and then facing the Altar table says: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed are you on the throne of glory of your Kingdom, seated upon the cherubim. Amen.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverbs 9:10).”

“Consider who they are that sing with you, and that should be enough to move you to vigilance. It should be sufficient when you remember that, while being clothed in a body and bound up with the flesh, you have been accounted worthy to hymn the Lord, who is common to all, together with the bodiless powers.” (Chrysostom).”

The ENTRANCE PRAYER said during the procession of the Gospel from the altar table and back

AN ENTRANCE INTO THE VISION OF ISALAH AS WE ENTER THE CHURCH

This was the ancient beginning of the liturgy. Originally this prayer was said as the clergy and people entered through the front doors known as the *Royal Doors*. The entire assembly is making an ascent into the Kingdom of God. We are all drawing near to the altar, which is a manifestation of Christ and His Kingdom. Christ is gathering us at His sacrificial table. It is the throne of the King and Lord. (Schmemmann, Eucharist).

The Prayer: “Master, Lord our God, You have established in heaven the orders and hosts of angels and archangels to minister to Your glory. Grant that holy angels may enter with us, that together we may serve (together) and glorify Your goodness. For to You belong all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit and to the ages of ages.” (Holy Cross faculty translation)

The Prayer of the Trisagion Hymn: often said silently but should be said out loud - think of Isaiah in the Temple as we read through this

“Holy God, You dwell among your saints. You are praised by the Seraphim with the thrice-holy hymn glorified by the Cherubim and worshiped by all the heavenly powers. You have brought all things out of nothing into being. You have created man and women in Your image and likeness and adorned them with all the gifts of Your grace. You give wisdom and understanding to the supplicant, and do not overlook the sinner, but have established repentance as the way of salvation. You have enabled us, Your lowly and unworthy servants, to stand at this hour before the glory of Your holy Altar of sacrifice and to offer to You due worship and praise. Master, accept the Thrice holy hymn also from the lips of us sinners and visit us in Your goodness. Forgive all our voluntary and involuntary transgressions, sanctify our souls and bodies and grant that we may worship and serve You in holiness all the days of our lives, by the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints who have pleased You throughout the ages.”

6And there was sent to me one of the seraphs, and he had in his hand a coal, which he had taken off the altar with the tongs: 7 and he touched my mouth, and said, Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.

Why didn't the angel just grab the *fiery coal* in the first place from the altar, why did he use *tongs* (*Lavida*)? It didn't burn the angel's hand after he took it from the tongs and brought it to Isaiah in his hand.

John of Damascus (675-749): “Let us draw near to it (Holy Communion) with an ardent desire, and with our hands held in the form of the cross let us receive the body of the Crucified One: and let us apply our eyes and lips and brows and partake of the divine coal, in order that the fire of the longing, that is in us, with the additional heat derived from the coal may utterly consume our sins and illumine our hearts, and that we may be inflamed and deified by the participation in the divine fire.”

“Christ, the coal of fire, whom holy Isaiah foresaw, now rests in the arms of the God-bearer Mary as in a pair of tongs, and He is given to the elder.” (Hymn from the feast of Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Feb 2)

“But let the fiery coal of Your most pure Body and Your most precious Blood bring me sanctification, enlightenment and strengthening of my lowly soul and body, relief from the burden of my many transgressions, protection against every action of the devil, repulsion and victory over my wicked and evil habits, mortification of my passions, accomplishment of Your commandments, increase of Thy divine grace, and inheritance of Your Kingdom. (Chryostom: Prayer before Communion).”

The priest repeats the words of Isaiah in a silent prayer every time he communes himself at the altar, *‘Behold, this has touched my lips; and my iniquity is taken away.’*