

THE HOLINESS OF GOD BY R C SPROUL

CHAPTER 2: HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

References (Black book, White book, Kindle)

I. CONTEXT OF ISAIAH'S CALL (21, 15, K158)

A. Old Testament prophet

1. A lonely, rugged, individualist sent by God to prosecute those who had sinned against the Judge
2. Not a philosopher or a playwright but a messenger for a cosmic King who prefaced everything with "Thus saith the Lord."

B. Isaiah was the prophet of prophets

1. Statesman with access to the royal court and who spoke truth to power
2. Called by God, could not refuse, could not resign or retire

"The king had died. But when Isaiah entered the temple, he saw another king, the Ultimate King, the One who sat forever on the throne of Judah. He saw the Lord" (K182)

II. THE GOD OF ISAIAH'S CALL (24, 18, K191)

A. The Name of God

1. Lord "Adonai" is not a name but a title meaning "sovereign one"
2. Supreme title in OT and given to Jesus in NT
3. LORD "Yahweh" is the most sacred personal name of God
4. Different uses of "LORD" and "Lord" indicate care with which people used God's name

B. The Sight of God

1. Isaiah saw God but it is impossible to see God and live
2. Moses only saw God's backparts/hindquarters but not His face
3. Israel had to be shielded from seeing the face of Moses after he saw God's backparts
4. Yet every Israelite had the hope of seeing God's face (Num. 6:24-26)
5. This becomes a promise for the Christian (Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2)
6. This future face-to-face expectation is called the beatific vision
7. We will see God's pure divine essence because we will have been purified

III. THE SONG OF ISAIAH'S CALL (29, 22, K230)

A. The Singers

1. Though Seraphim not sinful yet still creatures and had to shield their eyes before God and hide their feet acknowledging their creatureliness

B. The Song

1. The crux of Isaiah's vision is the song of the Seraphim (Isa. 6:3)
2. The Trisagion – Three Times Holy – “The church's most august anthem.”
3. Repetition used for emphasis and three times for superlative
4. Only time in Bible a characteristic of God is mentioned three times
5. Never says “God is love, love, love” or “God is wrath, wrath, wrath”

IV. THE RESPONSE TO ISAIAH'S CALL (33, 25, K266)

A. “Woe is me”

1. Doors are not the only thing shaking – Isaiah's body also is.
2. The most frequent form of divine utterances were oracles – good news or bad news from God
3. Positive oracles were prefaced with “blessed” (beatitudes) – brought good tidings
4. Negative oracles were prefaced with “woe” (Matt. 23:13-29) – announcements of doom
5. Isaiah was calling the judgment of God/the curse/God's anathema down upon His head

B. “I am undone”

1. I am coming apart at the seams – unraveling - disintegrating
2. To integrate is to put something together as a unified whole
3. Integrity comes from this root and was a good description of Isaiah
4. He was a man of integrity – he had it all together
5. Then he caught one sight of God and his sense of integrity collapsed – he came apart

C. “I am a man of unclean lips”

1. “I have a dirty mouth”
2. But why focus on the mouth
 - a. Jesus said it's not what goes into the mouth but what comes out that defiles them

- b. James described the tongue as a restless evil, full of deadly poison
- 3. Isaiah had a new sense of the pervasive nature of sin in himself and everyone else
- 4. God usually reveals our corruption to us gradually but showed it to Isaiah at once – that’s why he was ruined

D. “My eyes have seen the king, the Lord Almighty”

- 1. For the first time in his life Isaiah really understood who God was and who Isaiah was.

V. THE COMFORT OF ISAIAH’S CALL (38, 30, K314)

A. Isaiah grovels in the dirt

- 1. “Isaiah was groveling on the floor. Every nerve fiber in his body was trembling. He was looking for a place to hide....anything that would get him out from under the holy gaze of God” (38, 30, K314)
- 2. This “was pure moral anguish, the kind that rips out the heart of a man and tears his soul to pieces. Guilt. Guilt. Guilt. Relentless guilt screamed from every pore.” (38, 30, K314)

B. God graciously cleanses

- 1. God moved to cleanse the man and restore his soul
- 2. Commanded the Seraphim to touch his lips with glowing hot coal from the altar
- 3. Lips are one of the most sensitive parts of human flesh
- 4. A painful act of cleansing as God cauterized his mouth and burned away the dirt in his mouth.
- 5. Isaiah cleansed and forgiven to the core via the pain of repentance

VI. THE RESULT OF ISAIAH’S CALL (39, 31, K326)

A. A Question

- 1. For the first time he hears the voice of God “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?”

B. A Pattern: From brokenness to mission is the human pattern

- 1. God appears
- 2. People quake in terror
- 3. God forgives and heals
- 4. God sends - To be sent meant to function as an emissary of God

C. An Answer: “Here am I”

1. Not just “Here I am” which would simply have identified his location but this was an act of volunteering
2. God shattered him into a thousand pieces then put him together again

VII. THREE LESSONS FROM ISAIAH’S CALL (40, 32, K338)

- A. God took a shattered man and sent him into the ministry
- B. God’s grace did not annihilate Isaiah’s personal identity/personality (Still an “I”)
 1. Overhauled but not annihilated
 2. God does not destroy the self but redeems the self.
- C. The more faithful preachers are to the Word of God the more liable they are to the charge of hypocrisy
 1. The more faithful they are, they higher the message they will preach and the further they will be from obeying it
 2. One of the pains of preaching on the holiness of God is that people assume I am as holy as my message
 3. I have a hunger for the holiness of God because I am not holy
 4. But I have had just enough of a taste of the majesty of God to want more
 5. I know what it means to be a forgiven man, a sent man, a man on a mission.
 6. “My soul cries for more. My soul needs more.”