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I Am a Man of Unclean Lips

6: 5

I am a man of unclean lips DIG: What made Isaiah despair for his life and confess his sin (see Exodus 20:19 and 33:20)? What does ruined really mean? What did the prophet believe was going to happen to him? Why?

REFLECT: How is your experience of God like Isaiah's? Awestruck? Guilt-ridden? Cleansed? Changed? Has it changed your opinion of yourself or those around you? Why or why not?

At this point, **Isaiah** becomes brutally aware of **himself**, feeling uneasy to the point of terror at being in the very presence of **the Creator**. After pronouncing judgment upon others (**5:8-25**), now **he** must pronounce judgment upon **himself**. Prophetic announcement was not enough; personal confrontation was necessary. Eventually, **everyone** in **Y'hudah** needed to acknowledge **their** condition before **ADONAI-Tzva'ot (CJB)**.



When **Isaiah** saw a vision of **God** seated on a throne, high and exalted, **he** exclaimed: **Woe to me! I am ruined**. The English word **ruined** is translated from the Hebrew word *dama*, meaning *silence* brought about by loss (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Di - A Message Concerning the Philistines**), or *death* (**Psalms 49:12**). *To be silenced or put out of existence* in this context would mean to be excluded from the heavenly choir singing: **Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts. He** therefore lamented: **I am ruined**, because **he** suddenly realized that **he** was **a man of unclean lips and he** lived **among people of unclean lips**. Why had **he** come to that conclusion? **His eyes had seen the**

King, the LORD of heaven's armies in a vision (6:5 CJV), and in **God's holy** presence, **Isaiah** came face to face with **his** own true spiritual condition. Later **he** would write: **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away (Isaiah 64:6).** **He** fully expected *to be put out of existence* and gives **three reasons** why:

First, **he** realized **his** own impure state: **For I am a man of unclean lips.** While the **lips** of the seraphim were saying **holy, holy, holy, Isaiah's lips** were sinful and unclean. We can only see our sinfulness when we see **God's** holiness. As long as we compare ourselves to others, either some believers or unbelievers, we can come out looking very good. There is always someone worse than we are. But when we see **the One** who is **holy, holy, holy**, then we see our own sinful condition. The book of **Job** is a good example of this. In places like **Job 1:8** and **Job 2:3**, when compared with other men and women, **he** always comes out looking good. **YHVH** said that **there was no one on earth like him; he was blameless and upright.** But after being in the presence of **ADONAI**, **Job** fully recognized **his** sinful state (**Job 42:5-6**).

Secondly, **Isaiah** states: **I live among people of unclean lips.** **Isaiah** had previously condemned **Y'hudah's** sins in the first five chapters. **He** was faithful to **his** position as a prophet and delivered the message that **God** intended to send to **the southern kingdom of Judah.** But nonetheless, **the prophet** was very hard on **her.** But then **he** recognized that **he** was in the same boat as the rest of **the nation.** In other words, **he** had the same sin nature that **they** had. I am sure it was a pretty humbling experience.

Such an encounter cannot help but produce despair. For the finite, the mortal, the incomplete and the fallible to encounter **the Infinite, the Eternal, the Complete** and **the Infallible**, is to realize the futility and hopelessness of one's existence. This is why existential thinking leads to a desperate dependence on self and the exclusion of **YHVH.** It presumes there is no meaning in the universe and, as a result, they are thus meaningless. It is no surprise that they question why they should go on living. Apart from **the way the truth and the life (John 14:6)**, there is only death, separation and darkness.

Thirdly, **he** feared death. It could not have been a coincidence that in the year of **King Uzziah's** death, **Isaiah** saw **the King.** The prophet realized that the fate of **Judah**, as well as **his** own fate, did not rest in the hands of a human **king**, however competent and faithful **he** may be. More accurately, it is in the hands of **the Creator.** **The** lesser **king** had to be removed so that the greater **King** could be seen. Later **he** could say: **My eyes have seen the King, ADONAI-Tzva'ot.** From that moment on, **he** was reluctant to call anyone **King**

but **God**.

Once there was a man who took his children up to a cabin without his wife. The cabin is a rustic place with no running water, no electricity, but plenty of space for the kids to run and play. On the day that they were to go back home, he got them dressed in the morning, packed up the van, and loaded them in. He took a look at them as he was getting them in the van, and thought they look pretty good - a little grubby, but clean enough. They all slept as he drove until they pulled into a McDonalds to get lunch - then he looked back at them, and they were disgusting! What looked clean at the cabin, now in the light of civilization, looked disgusting! **Isaiah** had the same experience - he looked pretty good - good enough to walk into the Temple, but in the gleaming light of the presence of a perfect, holy **God**, he was dirty enough to die! "I'm going to die!" he says. **He** is a prophet of **the Most High**, and out of **his** mouth came the very words of **the LORD** when he spoke: **I am a man of unclean lips, and I come from a people of unclean lips.**