**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 23 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**PREPARATION FOR SERVICE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*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. 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. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 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. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this bath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 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. And He said, Go.*

*Isaiah 6:1-9a*

STANDING AS WE DO ON THE THRESHOLD OF OUR WINTER'S work, feeling that we are coming to days of harvest and of gracious ingathering, the question of my own heart has been, Lord, what hast Thou to say to me? I feel that if I can but hear what He has to say to me, I may venture to pass the word on to you.

This passage of Scripture is familiar to us all. In the middle of the ninth verse the revelation of perpetual principles ends. After that we have the commission spoken to Isaiah concerning his own time. He was commissioned to utter a message of devastating judgment. We are not commissioned to utter that message. The local, and the incidental, occupy the last half of this chapter. The essential and the eternal occupy the first part.

The opening words of this passage fix in the history of the Hebrew people the event it recounts. "In the year that king Uzziah died." The reign of Uzziah over Judah, which had lasted for fifty-two years, was over, and his son Jotham was about to succeed to the throne. Israel was suffering under the fearful tyranny of a military despotism. Shallum came to the throne by the murder of his predecessor. Menahem came to the throne by the murder of Shallum. Pekahiah succeeded his father, but was murdered by Pekah. And now Pekah was on the throne, reigning over a people who were soon to be scattered.

The reign of Uzziah had been remarkable in many respects. When he ascended the throne fifty-two years before, as a youth of sixteen, he had set himself to seek God, and the issue had been a period of remarkable prosperity. He had conducted a series of victorious campaigns against the enemies of God, by which he restored much lost territory. Following these, he brought about internal development, the building of towers, the making of cisterns, the planting of the land, its cultivation, and the increasing of husbandry. It was a wonderful reign to a certain point. Then his heart became lifted up, and the man who was victorious over the perils of adversity was overcome by the perils of prosperity. He rebelled against God, and was smitten with leprosy, and for the last period of his life lived in a lazar house. At last he died.

It was at this point that there came to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, the vision recounted in this chapter. He had lived in Judah, and had known no occupant of the throne of his own people other than the king who had now passed away. In the economy of God the time had now arrived when he should come forth to his definite and public ministry. In this wonderful passage we have the story of his solemn ordination.

The passage falls into two parts, first, the vision; and second, the voice.

In the first verse these are the outstanding words, "I saw the Lord." In verse five we have the answer to that. "Then said I, Woe is me!" In verse eight we have the outstanding words of the second division. "I heard the voice of the Lord." In the last part of the same verse is the answer, "Then I said, Here am I; send me."

Take the simplest of these sentences that we may have the outline of the study on our minds. "I saw the Lord." ... "Then said I." "I heard the voice of the Lord." ... "Then I said." A vision and a voice, and in that order. First the vision with all that it meant of revelation to the soul of this man of truth concerning God, and consequently of truth concerning himself, and all that it led on to of cleansing. And then, and not till then, the voice, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" First the vision, and then the voice. First the personal relationship to essential Light, and Love; and then the relative commission in obedience to which, the man illuminated and cleansed, went out to do the work of God. If I am to do anything for my Master, today, tomorrow, and the next day, I must have this vision, I must hear this voice. My answer to the vision must be Isaiah's answer, and my answer to the voice must be his also.

Let us, then, first examine the vision. What did Isaiah see? The first thing that is impressed upon the mind in the study of the passage is that the prophet saw an occupied throne. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." That is the first truth that broke upon the soul of the prophet, with such terrific force and power that he spoke as though he had never seen the vision before. As a matter of fact, this man had long seen the Lord high and lifted up, but the empty throne was the occasion which revealed to him the true significance of the filled Throne.

"In the year that King Uzziah died." The news spread from street to street, from town to town, from village to village, that the king was dead. There came to Isaiah the sense of loss in the passing of the king. Chaos was everywhere. Israel was in such a terrible condition that she could not exist any longer nationally. Judah was following hard and fast in the wake of Israel to the same defeat and disaster. The one throne to which Isaiah had looked for support was empty. Men said to the psalmist, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

And that, perchance, was the first feeling that came to the heart of the prophet when the throne of Judah was empty. Who now will succeed? Then, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne." Behind the empty throne, there is a throne that is never empty. Over the chaos that appals the heart there is the God of order and government.

I think if we had cross-examined Isaiah, he would have been unable to describe the personality upon which his eyes rested, but he saw the Lord. A Person was manifested to him. Through this whole book of Isaiah there is presented a Personality vague and undefined, a Personality that startles us with contradictions, a Personality robed in splendor, girded with strength, with government sitting upon his shoulder; a Personality stripped, wounded, bruised, suffering; a King reigning in righteousness, and prosecuting His propaganda to the end of the ages, and through all the spheres, a bruised and broken. Man Who says, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom bath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Vague shadowy outlines, never quite clear until the New Testament is in your hand, but nevertheless a Person. Isaiah's first vision of this Person was so vague that he could not perfectly describe it, so definite that he said, "I saw the Lord."

He proceeded immediately from the description of the central Person to that of the surrounding facts; seraphim, flaming glory, smoke, reverberating thunder, and the maintenance of a song, but the Person is mentioned and left, "I saw the Lord." The essential truth is that of a Person enthroned.

There is a very beautiful connection between the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John and the whole prophecy of Isaiah. It is the chapter of Jesus overshadowed by the Cross. The first incident is that of Mary's coming very near to His grief, and breaking the alabaster box of ointment upon His feet. The second incident is that of His entrance to Jerusalem, which we call the triumphal entry, all full of sorrow to Him. The third incident is that of the coming of the Greeks. The Cross is everywhere. It was the shadow of the Cross that drew forth the adoring worship of Mary, that filled His own eyes with tears as He rode into Jerusalem, that made Him reply when Greeks asked to see Him, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone."

Now look at verse forty-one in this chapter. "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory." What said Isaiah? "Lord, who bath believed our report?" "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory." Isaiah's conception in chapter fifty-three of the mystery and the agony of rejection had been made tremendous because he saw His glory. When did he see His glory? When he was commissioned for his work. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." The first thing the prophet saw ere he went forth to work that was to be hard and perilous and difficult was the vision of the enthroned God. The throne of Judah is empty. There is chaos everywhere. For this man the Throne is filled, and out of the chaos the cosmos is coming.

He next proceeded to speak of the surrounding glory, the seraphim, the flames of fire; the hosts of the Most High God. Six-winged seraphim. In the presence of that Personality, with two wings they veiled their faces, with two they veiled their feet, with two they were perpetually flying. This is of course symbolic, and we can interpret such symbolism only by Eastern thought. The face is the symbol of intellectual apprehension, the feet are the symbols of governmental procedure, the wings are symbolic of activity Divinely inspired. The unveiling of the nature of the enthroned One is seen in the activity of the burning spirits that surround the throne. They veil their faces, unable to come to perfect intellectual apprehension of the mystery of His Being. They veil their feet, for while they are principalities, dominions, rulers, their governmental procedure gains its strength from sub-mission to His Throne. The veiling of the feet is the hiding of personal authority in the presence of supreme Authority. But the wings, the remaining wings, are ever active, inspired by the very Spirit of life; they perpetually serve under the authority of His Throne.

Now listen to the song. It is a twofold song. First, the song of the nature of the enthroned One. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." Then it is a song about earth. I am always so thankful when I come to this. It is a song about earth in that high presence chamber, with the enthroned Jehovah revealed personally, but so that He cannot be described; surrounded by the flaming spirits that veil their faces of intelligence, and their feet of government, and beat their wings in perpetual service. What is this they sing of the earth? "The whole earth is full of His glory," or notice the marginal reading of the revised version, "the fullness of the whole earth is His glory." These spirits that surround the throne look down to the earth and see God's glory in it. Isaiah has a different vision of it presently, and these spirits saw his vision also, but they are singing in the presence of God of an ultimate triumph of truth, of a final restoration, of a final victory. They are singing by faith and hope, in the presence of God, of the victory that is to be. "The whole earth is full of His glory." The great psalm of the King, which describes His procedure to ultimate victory, ends with the words that the seraphim sang in the presence of God. "The whole earth is full of His glory." So that the psalm of the glory of God, which is part of the inheritance of the saint here and now amid the chaos and the darkness and the strife and the battle, is the perpetual song which angels sing.

Notice for a moment the effect of the song on the earthly temple. The very "thresholds were moved," trembled. "The house was filled with smoke." We shall be perfectly correct if we translate this word "smoke" by "anger." In Psalm 80, verse four, we read;

O Jehovah, God of hosts, How long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?

The literal translation of this is, "How long wilt Thou smoke against the prayer of Thy people?" The connection shows that smoke is a symbol of anger. In the day of God's activity it is said by the ancient prophet Joel that there shall be "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke"; and Isaiah, in that high presence chamber, saw the uplifted God upon His throne; saw the burning spirits round the throne veiling their faces and feet, and ceaselessly moving to do His bidding; heard their song, the song of ultimate victory, in the earth itself; and yet there was the trembling of things in the temple of God. There was the filling of the house with smoke, typical of His anger. So this man stood in the midst of the awful vision, conscious of God's holiness, and His enthronement, conscious of the victory that must be final, and yet conscious that anger was abroad, that judgment was out on the highway of the Most High. The house trembled and was filled with smoke.

And now how did he answer the vision? The answer was not a prepared one. The greatest words men speak in the presence of God, either about God, or to God, are words that come surging out of the deepest consciousness, words that must be spoken because no others are fit. And when this man stood in the midst of the glory, when for a moment his eyes were unveiled, what did he say? Oh, the agony of the cry, "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." All of which means that when the prophet had a clear vision of God, he had the true vision of man. And when the prophet had the clearer vision of the Divine order, he had a more overwhelming sense of human disaster. Notice that the cry concerning himself proceeds backward, from effect to cause. The effect, "Woe is me!" The reason of the woe, "I am undone." The reason of the being undone, "I am a man of unclean lips."

Why unclean lips only? Why did he not say unclean heart, why did he not say unclean spirit? Again, the language is symbolic, and it is most simple symbolism. Let us turn over to the epistle of James (3:6). "The tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison." As in the Divine, the Word is the expression of the God; so in the human, the speech of man is the expression of man, and the lips and the tongue are the instruments of speech. This man standing in the presence of the glory confesses that his lips are polluted. Let Jesus speak, "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man." Within is the fountain head of corruption, but it is poured out and expressed through the tongue and lips, and so Isaiah says, "I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." The words are unclean, because the fact that they have to express is an unclean fact. What has this to do with his work? Everything. I do not know how you all feel, my brethren, but the most stupendous evidence to my heart, every day growing, of the grace of God is not that He saves me. That is a great evidence of grace, amazing grace! But the most stupendous evidence of God's grace is that when He saves me He consents to use me. And, my brethren, one of the first qualifications for being ready is to have stood in the presence of His glory, and to have found out how unworthy I am to utter His message. God almighty is my witness that I am not speaking to you idly. Every day I am more astonished that God should use me at all.

And what follows? I do not know that it would not be good to sit still and read the rest almost without comment. It is so simple. "Then" - I wish I knew how to emphasize that "then," because it is the dividing line. We have tried to look at the glory of God, at the enthroned Jehovah, at this man smitten in his inner consciousness with a sense of unworthiness. Then what? "Then flew one of the seraphim." Taking in his hand one of the sacred vessels from the altar, the place of blood and fire, and catching one of the burning coals from the altar, he comes to that man.

Now, whereas I want to speak especially of the fact that for the man called to service there is perfect cleansing and energizing provided, what I want you to see first is that out of the midst of the overwhelming and awful glory of God comes the most overwhelming vision of His grace. The enthroned Jehovah surrounded by the burning spirits that worship. Do you hear the thunder of the seraphim as they sing? Can you hear anything else? I do not think I can. God can! What did He hear? The cry of a guilty man! Oh, soul of mine, take heart. One guilty man cries out in the consciousness of his sin, and the faint cry of that human soul, conscious of pollution, rises in the ear of God above the thunder of the seraphim. And a seraph must leave the place of worship to work when a human soul is in need. These are Divine measurements. These are not the measures we sometimes put upon evangelistic effort. That was evangelistic effort. And he brought the live coal and he touched the lips of the man, he touched that which the man had made the symbol of his own uncleanness. The man said, "I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips," and the seraph touched the lips, and said, "lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." This is one of the cases where I am almost inclined to translate iniquity very literally as to the actual meaning of the word. "Thy crookedness has been taken away." Fire has straightened out thee! But something more. "Thy sin is purged." Sin is offense, guilt, the thing in a man that is the outcome of his iniquity in his relation to God. What of that? It is purged, and here you may use the old Hebrew word, "thy sin is expiated." It is the word that the Hebrew made use of when he referred to atonement. It is the word to cover over, not in the sense of covering over a polluted thing, but to atone, to blot out. Thy sin, as against this high excellence and glory of heaven is expiated. Thy personal crookedness is straightened out. Your relative guilt is expiated.

And how was it done? By the coal of fire from the altar, and God Almighty cannot deal with Isaiah in his uncleanness except by the coal of fire that comes from the altar. What follows? Perhaps a pause. I do not know. There is no pause in the letterpress. I think there must have been a pause, a waiting moment, in which this man rose into the great consciousness that he was undone no longer, that his lips were no longer impure but purified; and it is as he waited in that great consciousness that the voice came. He had seen the vision of God. This was the outcome, and now the voice, and how much it says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Who will go? God is asking for volunteers. God needs someone to be sent, someone who will go. What is the question? Who is ready to be sent? "Whom shall I send?" "Who will go for Us?" and the emphasis in that second question is not on the "Go," but on "for Us." Who will be ready when I send them? Who will be in readiness to be sent, ready to represent Us? And then, thank God, notwithstanding that this man but a moment ago had expressed his consciousness of pollution, immediately came the answer, "Here am I; send me." "Here am I," that is abandonment; "send me," that is readiness. He could not have said that until his lips had been touched by the coal from the altar. The vision cursed him, but the fire cleansed him; and now when God wants help, this cleansed man says, I am at Thy disposal.

That is the whole law of service. In order to do successful service I need first a vision of God enthroned. Have you this vision of God? If you are not quite sure whether God's throne is tottering or not, you had better retire. You remember God's method of sifting an army. It was a wonderful method. Thirty-two thousand came out and said, We are all ready. And the first test was, Let the men fearful and afraid go home. And twenty-two thousand men turned right about face and marched home. Are you sure that was not a mistake? No, for in the day of battle the man who has fear in his heart is a peril. When the victory was won they all came back to shout. God bless them! But when we are fighting we do not want them.

Can we see God on His throne? That is the question. We can see the chaos. We are very blind if we cannot. National corruption, municipal rottenness, dilettante fooling with the problems of poverty that ought to be the problem of every statesman. But high over all earthly thrones is the Throne that never trembles. If you can see God on His Throne, then that Throne is commissioning you to take the evangel of the crucified Christ to cure all the ills of humanity. That is our message. We must have a vision of His enthronement, of His holiness, and we must have this also, the vision of His ultimate glory in the earth. And then we need the vision of self. If I may have a vision of His glory I need the true vision of self. We need also the cleansing that He provides. We are not fit for all this. But to stay there is to dishonour God. Remember the altar is there, and the fire is there. God help us to get to the altar. He will cleanse us and purge us, and with a baptism of fire make us all He wants us to be, if only we will let Him. Let us look up into His face, solemnly and earnestly saying, By the vision of Thine enthronement, by the matchless mercy of the altar and the fire, here am I; send me.