
A vision of the celestial sphere would be difficult if not impossible to describe. That was the dilemma of the prophet Isaiah. He endeavored in these verses to portray something of the power and glory of his experience, using images and terms with which his readers could identify. Even then he sensed how much he fell short of communicating the reality of the experience. Later in his writing, Isaiah described the inadequacy of words and even of the senses of mortal man to comprehend heavenly things. He wrote: “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him” (Isaiah 6:4).

Others who have experienced visions of the celestial realms have cited Isaiah in an attempt to explain their limited ability to tell of what they had been shown (see 1 Corinthians 2:9; D&C 76:10). The Prophet Joseph Smith provided a perspective on such experiences when he said: “Could we read and comprehend all that has been written from the days of Adam, on the relation of man to God and angels in a future state, we should know very little about it. Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.” (Teachings, p. 324.)

(13-32) Isaiah 6:1. “In the Year That King Uzziah Died”

The approximate year of King Uzziah’s death was 740 B.C. The events preceding it and following it can be reviewed in Enrichment F.

(13-33) Isaiah 6:1. “I Saw... the Lord”

Both John and Nephi testified that the Lord whom Isaiah saw was the premortal Jesus Christ (see John 12:41; 2 Nephi 11:2–3). In addition, some have witnessed a similar scene (see Revelation 4:1–11).

(13-34) Isaiah 6:2. What Are Seraphim?

“Seraphs are angels who reside in the presence of God, giving continual glory, honor, and adoration to him. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.” (Ps. 148:2.) It is clear that seraphs include the unembodied spirits of pre-existence, for our Lord looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made.’

(D. & C. 38:1.) Whether the name seraphs also applies to perfected and resurrected angels is not clear. While petitioning on behalf of the saints, the Prophet prayed that ‘we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!’

(D. & C. 109:79.)

“In Hebrew the plural of seraph is seraphim or, as incorrectly recorded in the King James Version of the Bible, seraphims. Isaiah saw seraphim in vision and heard them cry one to another ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ (JST, Isa. 6:1–8.) The fact that these holy beings were shown to him as having wings was simply to symbolize their ‘power, to move, to act, etc.’ as was the case also in visions others had received. (D. & C. 77:4.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pp. 702–3.)


Another rendering of the first phrase from the Hebrew suggests more clearly what was intended: “the foundations of the thresholds trembled” (Isaiah 6:4a).