

THROUGH THE BIBLE

ISAIAH 4-6

Ever laid down under a tall oak tree, and gazed upwards? You see branches and limbs overlapping.

It's tough to tell which limbs are on top and which are on the bottom. Distance between the limbs is impossible to judge. It's a maze. And this is how it is with prophecy in general, and with Isaiah in particular.

Some of what Isaiah saw was local and current. It occurred during the rise of the Assyrian Empire.

Other aspects of his vision wouldn't be fulfilled for several hundred years when God sent the Babylonians to judge the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah.

Still a vast portion of Isaiah's prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. Isaiah saw events that won't occur until a time yet future when Jesus returns to earth and establishes His kingdom. These overlapping applications make the book of Isaiah tough for us to interpret. In fact, I'm sure Isaiah himself didn't fully understand all that he saw.

Isaiah's first prophecy has this overlapping feature.

Chapters 2-5 is a single prophecy. 2:2 states it's for "the latter days..." But it also spoke to the current situation. Assyrian troops were parked in the suburbs north of Jerusalem. It was time to sound the alarm.

This is the book of Isaiah... he sees locally and globally... he speaks to current and future dilemmas... and sometimes he does both in the same passage.

Reading Isaiah is like looking up into the tree limbs.

Isaiah 4:1 predicts a man shortage. “**And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man...**” In wartime men die in battle, and young women are left without available men to marry. **There’s a shortage of men.**

This is also what’s happened today on America’s college campuses. In most non-engineering schools women far outnumber men. This year’s undergrad enrollment at UGA is 57% female. At the College of Charleston the undergrad population is 62% women.

And this too is due to a war - not a literal war, but a battle of the sexes. Our culture’s insistence on gender equality has produced a bias against boys. It’s created an educational system that now favors girls. School today is a girl’s world. It’s easier for girls to succeed.

And this change has backfired on women. In winning the battle of the sexes there’s now a smaller pool of educated marriage partners. Here’s the irony, when men are deprived the opportunity to lead women suffer.

Rather than *compete* the sexes need to *complement*.

Isaiah says 7 women will grab one man, “**saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach."** Women will be so desperate to get married they’ll be willing to let a potential husband off the hook.

He won’t have to provide for his family. His wife will agree to birth and raise the babies, do the housework, AND work a job to feed and clothe herself and her kids.

And this is the social landscape “*women’s liberation*” has created in our country. Once upon a time, women were honored by men. Men sacrificed to provide for their wives, so the wife could focus on her family.

Women were sheltered. Treated to special privileges.

But in the mid-1970s, American feminism demanded freedom from male authority. Women’s liberation fought for *equal* treatment for both men and women.

Yet here’s what feminism didn’t realize - “**equal**” is how men treat other men - “**You pull your weight. I’ll pull mine.**” Women now have equal treatment, but it turns out “**equal**” isn’t what most women really want.

Women long to be treated “**special**” not “**equal**” - dare I say it, even “**lady-like.**” Biblical masculinity doesn’t *dominate* women, it *elevates* women. True male leadership treats women to a better quality of life.

Verse 2, “**In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped.**” God makes three promises in the wake of His judgments. **First**, “*the Branch shall be glorious.*”

“*The Branch*” was a Messianic term. Messiah was a branch from David’s family tree. God promised King David a dynasty that would produce a everlasting ruler who’d sit on an eternal throne. *Jesus is that Branch!*

Second, Isaiah promises restoration and prosperity. After judgment “*the fruit of the earth shall be excellent.*”

And **third**, a remnant or group of Jews will escape the judgment and live to begin again. This prophecy came true in Isaiah's day, and it will also give hope to future Jews who will endure the Great Tribulation.

The future Jews will emerge from a terrible time to live 1000 years in the shade of a new ruler, the Branch.

Jesus will return to Earth to sit on Israel's throne - to restore God's people - and to insure their prosperity.

Since Isaiah's prophecy swings back and forth from *his day* to *the last days*, let me give you a brief outline of the prophetic scenarios that end this current age...

Today, God is growing His Church. When He's done the Church is raptured - and God again turns His focus to Israel. By various means He preaches the Gospel.

But as it's done for 2000 years, Israel will refuse to trust in Jesus as their Messiah, *or Christ*. Thus, God allows the nation to be double-crossed by *an Antichrist*.

This world leader leads a global revolt against God, which God topples with a flurry of cataclysmic chaos.

It all culminates in a war where Jesus returns to put down the revolt and establish God's kingdom on the Earth. Finally, Israel embraces Jesus as their Messiah.

And in the new world that emerges, Israel prospers, while King Jesus rules the world in peace and justice.

Verse 3, "And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy - everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem." Obviously, this follows a great devastation.

“When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning...” The book of Revelation zeroes in on a final, seven year period of fierce judgment from God.

It’s called “*The Great Tribulation*” and it has two purposes. The world is punished, but Israel is purified.

The same events impact both groups differently.

“Then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering.” This is an amazing promise. “The cloud by day and fire by night” will appear again. These two phenomena have always symbolized God’s presence.

In Genesis 15 when God made His strategic covenant with Abraham, He appeared to Abraham as a smoking censor and a burning torch - *smoke and fire*.

When God led Israel through the wilderness He sent a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night.

When the Temple was established fire fell on the sacrifice, and a glory cloud filled the Holy Place.

Even in the NT, on the Day of Pentecost, tongues of fire were seen over the heads of the disciples, and the Holy Spirit came as a mighty wind to fill His followers.

Even today God’s Spirit in us acts like a fire and a cloud. He burns away sin and reveals His heaviness.

Verse 6, “And there will be a tabernacle (some kind of tent) for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.”

Zechariah 14:16 predicts in the Kingdom Age the citizens of the world will come to Jerusalem to worship.

Apparently, provisions will be made for the crowds - *shade from the sun and shelter from the storm.*

And why not? Isn't this what Jesus has been to us! *Shade from the heat and shelter from the thunder.* It's fitting He provides the same for all who worship Him.

Chapter 5, “Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” Notice, Isaiah the *prophet* becomes a *poet*. He sings a song!

“He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.” Even today vineyards dot Judea's hillsides.

In the OT the grapevine was a symbol for the nation. The Temple doors were carved with golden vines.

A vine is a symbol of joy! And this is what Israel was supposed to bring to God - great joy! This is why God plowed, and planted, and weeded, and spent so much effort and time cultivating His people. But instead of producing “*good grapes,*” Israel yielded “*wild grapes.*”

Verse 3, “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that

I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" The vineyard's failure was not God's fault. The people sinned and rebelled against God.

And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it."

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help." Because of Judah's sin, God removed His protection. The vineyard became vulnerable to break-ins, takeovers, weeds and drought. In short, there's a limit to God's perseverance.

And this is true for both Israel of old - and Christians today. Read John 15 - the parable of the Vine and its branches. Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches.

And similar lessons are taught. Jesus says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away."

Push God's patience and there comes a time when He'll give up on turning your heart, and give you over to the independent life you've stubbornly pursued.

Resist God to a point, and He'll remove His hedge.

The rest of Isaiah 5 consists of six woes pronounced on Judah... Verse 8, "Woe to those who join house to house, they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!"

First, God condemns Jerusalem's overcrowding. Throughout the Bible God likes gardens - green space.

In Isaiah's day, real estate developers were cramming too many houses side-by-side. It increased profits, but at the cost of healthy living conditions.

“In my hearing the LORD of hosts said, “Truly, many houses shall be desolate, great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield one ephah.”

Once fertile land will become barren! A ten acre vineyard will produce a scant nine gallons of grapes.

Here Isaiah uses several ancient measurements... *A bath is 9 gallons. A homer was 11 bushels. An ephah equals one bushel.* Thus, it'll take 11 bushels of seed to yield one bushel of veges. This is what uncontrolled development does. It strips the land of its nutrients.

I hope you notice from this verse, God cares about the environment. **God goes green!** He is concerned with what we do to His creation. When mankind harms the environment it eventually brings harm to himself.

“Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them!” Here's another woe... to the party crowd! Beer at breakfast is not a good idea.

Start drinking first thing in the morning and there's a problem. Even in Isaiah's day the people of Judah couldn't wait to wrap their hands around a cold one.

“The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands.” Certainly, the Bible teaches that drunkenness is a sin. But when I read verse 12 the real offense here seems to be leaving God out of the celebration.

“They do not regard the work of the LORD.” The world parties to forget God. All our celebrations should focus on remembering Him and giving Him honor.

“Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

Therefore Sheol (another name for Hell) has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure; their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he who is jubilant, shall descend into it.” Notice they start out with an ice cold one in their hand, but end up as hungry, thirsty prisoners - ultimately inhabitants of Hell.

According to Isaiah, Judah’s party train was headed for *hard times on Earth*, and *hot times in eternity*.

I hope you don’t believe the common notion, that hell is one big party! *Everyone in hell will be raising hell.*

That’s not true. Sure, some folks party all the way to hell, verse 14, “He who is jubilant, shall descend into it...” But once you get there the refrigerator is empty!

There’re no “cold ones” in Hell. In Luke 16 the rich man cried out to Abraham from Hell, “Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” And sadly, no mercy was shown. Don’t expect the Coors Light Silver Bullet Express to run through hell cooling everybody down. *It won’t happen!*

Realize, drinking alcohol may be a matter of conscience, but drunkenness is a sin. *Do you know the only cells your body doesn't replenish are brain cells?*

The average person is born with 17 billion brain cells, and each time he or she consumes large amounts of alcohol it kills off about 10,000 brain cells.

There're a lot of reasons I don't drink, but not the least of which is, *I need all the brain cells I can get!*

Take heed to Isaiah and don't party your way to hell.

Notice one more point in verse 14, “**Sheol**” or “**Hell**” is enlarged. It seems Hell grows to fit the demand.

And to me, this speaks volumes about God's love.

In Matthew 25 Jesus said hell wasn't made for man, but for the devil and his demons. God sized up Hell for just a few occupants. He never wanted men to go there. Folks go to Hell because they choose to, by rejecting Jesus - but it was never God's intention.

Hell has to be enlarged to meet the demand.

Verse 15, “**People shall be brought down, each man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.**” People are brought down, and God is lifted up or exalted. This is the goal of His judgements.

J Vernon McGee writes in his commentary, “**In the thinking of the world, God has been removed from the throne of judgment... divested of authority... robbed of His**

regal prerogative... He has been towed to the edge of the world and pushed over as excess baggage...

He is characterized as a toothless old man with long whiskers, sitting on the edge of a fleecy cloud with a rainbow around His shoulders. He is simple, senile, and sentimental... He does not have enough courage or backbone to swat a fly or crush a grape. His place is in the corner by the fireplace, where He can knit. This is the world's concept of God, but this is not the God of the Bible." One day our God will surprise the naïve.

Yet this second woe ends in blessing, "Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture, and in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat." When Jesus reigns there'll be enough leftover for strangers to feast.

Here's a third "woe." "Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as if with a cart rope..."

Judah was prideful. They thought they could sin and not be caught. They "*draw iniquity with cords of vanity.*"

Verse 19 finishes quoting them, "that say, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it." In other words, "If God is going to judge us, let's see Him do it now!"

They reveled in sin and mocked God. It was Francis Schaefer who said, "What marks our generation? It's the fact that modern man looks to the universe and thinks nobody is home." We think we're alone. We're accountable to no one. We're in for a huge shock!

Verse 20 is a woe for modern times! “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” Men will rewrite the moral code.

And this is what’s happened today... *Tolerance for homosexuality is a virtue. Any opposition is bigotry...*

Pornography is freedom of expression. Modesty is repression... Abortion is the right to choose. Pro-life is the oppression of women... Hooking up, casual sex, is a right of passage. Virginity, purity, is dysfunctional...

Anti-Christian rhetoric is protected by the First Amendment. Biblical teaching is now “hate speech...”

As Isaiah said, “Evil is called good and good evil.”

Morality has been turned topsy-turvy. Cultural norms and mores are being rewritten today, just realize it’s the devil holding the pen in his hand, not God.

It reminds me of the music teacher who picked up a mallet and struck a tuning fork. He said to the class...

“Here’s the good news. That’s an “A.” It’s an “A” today. It was an “A” 5000 years ago. It will be an “A” 10,000 years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key. The tenor across the hall flats on his high notes. The piano downstairs is out of tune.” He hit the tuning fork again, “But that is still an “A,” and that is really good news.” Real truth never changes. Despite man’s reinterpretations, God’s Word is forever immutable.

Last week a man asked me why we don't make room for female pastors. I told him we believe the Bible. He said, *"But it needs to be updated from time to time."* That's where we disagreed. I'm sticking to the script.

Here's the woe he needs to hear, verse 21, *"Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"* Proverbs 16:25 echoes this verse and explains its wisdom, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."*

God sees dangers we don't see. He's smarter than we are, and we'll avoid great pain by obeying Him.

Here's another woe, *"Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink..."* The Bible might not prohibit the use of alcohol, but it certainly warns us of its dangers. Beware...

Also woe to the man *"who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!"*

Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled.

Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." Twice in history this prophecy

was fulfilled. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and in 70 AD by the Romans.

The carcasses of Israelis littered Jerusalem's streets.

Yet according to Isaiah "His anger is not turned away, but His hand is outstretched still..." And thus, the Bible predicts one more final invasion of Jerusalem.

At the midway point of the final seven years of Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and invade. Jews will flee to the wilderness.

This is mentioned at the end of Revelation 11. Isaiah sees this last invasion, 200 years before the first. He describes it, verse 26, "(God) will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth; surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.

No one will be weary or stumble among them, no one will slumber or sleep; nor will the belt on their loins be loosed, nor the strap of their sandals be broken; whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hooves will seem like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind." These invaders are ruthless, relentless!

Their roaring will be like a lion, they will roar like young lions; yes, they will roar and lay hold of the prey; they will carry it away safely, and no one will deliver. In that day they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened by the clouds."

God will rally the nations together against Jerusalem.

It'll be an ominous site. Israel's only defense will be to turn to God. How ironic, the Almighty God Who was shoved, "In the corner by the fireplace, where He can knit" - will be seen as Israel's only hope and salvation.

Which brings us to Chapter 6 - a passage that reminds me of a brilliant theologian, Thomas Aquinas.

He wrote a massive systematic theology he called "[Summa Theologica](#)." He considered it the sum total of the knowledge of God. Yet on his deathbed the Spirit of God gave to Thomas Aquinas a vision of God's glory...

Thomas wrote, "What I have seen makes all that I have previously taught and written seem as but chaff (or straw) to me." This was the kind of vision and calling Isaiah experienced. He saw God in His glory.

The vision recorded in Chapter 6 was the turning point in Isaiah's life. It shaped the man and his ministry.

Chapter 6 begins, "[In the year that King Uzziah died...](#)" The vision Isaiah saw was so monumental he never forgot the date, 740 BC. The king had died.

Uzziah was a good and godly king. He reigned over Judah for 52 years. Tradition suggests Isaiah was his younger cousin. He'd never known life without Uzziah.

The king was Isaiah's mentor - a spiritual dad.

Their relationship was similar to the bond between Moses and Joshua, and Paul and Timothy.

But now Uzziah is gone! Isaiah lived his whole life in the shadow of this godly king, but now he's on his own!

And we've all experience this at some point.

If you haven't, you will. It occurs when you leave home, or when you're separated from a friend, or when a spiritual mentor moves on, or even passes away...

I'll never forget speaking to a mentor of mine about the calling God had placed on my life to start our church. I wanted to know what he thought of the idea.

He wisely refused to answer. He said, "Sandy, there comes a point when we all have to listen to God for ourselves." And it's true, "When there's no one left but God, for the first time you learn that God is enough."

That's exactly what Isaiah learned. It was time to dial direct - time to forge a firsthand relationship with God.

Once Uzziah was out of the picture, Isaiah says in verse 1, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple."

He saw God's sovereignty - He's sitting on a throne.

He saw His splendor - He's high and lifted up.

He saw His superiority - His train filled the temple.

In Hebrew the word "train" is translated "shule" which refers to the "hem, or fringe, or border at the bottom of a robe." In antiquity the hem of a garment represented the authority of the person who was wearing the robe.

This is why the priests wore special embroidery on the hem of their robes... David insulted Saul by clipping off the hem of his robe... In Ezekiel 16:8 God makes a covenant with Israel by covering her with the hem of his robe... Boaz proposed to Ruth by taking her "under his wing" - or the corner of his robe... Recall the woman hemorrhaging blood received healing by mustering the faith to grab the hem of Jesus' robe...

When Isaiah sees that the train of God's robe fills up the Temple, he realizes that *God's sovereignty*, and *His spender*, and *His superiority* are unsurpassed.

Verse 2 tells us, "Above (the throne) stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew."

There're two varieties of angels - cherubim and seraphim. Both types are found around God's throne.

The word "*Seraphim*" means "burning ones." And apparently, the seraphim have wings - six wings...

Isaiah says, "with two he covered his face" - God's glory was too much for him to handle... "With two he covered his feet" - the angel was too humble to stand in God's presence... "And with two he flew" - He stayed suspended in the presence of God. It represented *constant worship* and *tireless service*...

Isaiah heard these angels. "And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" The word "*holy*" means "set apart." It speaks of God's uniqueness.

We say *God is love*, but when we say *God is holy* we're saying He loves like no one else loves...

We say *God is faithful*, but when we say *He's holy* we're saying He's faithful like no one else is faithful... A holy God is in a class all by Himself. No one else compares. God is a cut above... *infinite cuts above!*

And notice the angels cry out three times, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts..." that's no doubt a reference to the Triune nature of the one true God.

Verse 4, “And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.” Isaiah beheld God’s sovereignty, splendor, set-apartness - now He feels His strength.

God twitches His muscle and all heaven shakes. The house of God fills with exhaust from His infinite glory.

Verse 5, “So I said: “Woe is me...” You’d think Isaiah would say “Wow” - instead his reaction is “Woe.”

Up against God’s glory all he can focus on is his own sin and slackness. He cries out, “For I am undone!”

Isaiah’s life was like an unmade bed. He left so many loose ends... Unfulfilled vows. Promises never kept.

Isaiah concludes, “Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Notice, Isaiah recognizes the depth of his problem.

He’s not just guilty of an occasional slip of the lip, he’s “a man of unclean lips.” It’s his nature to sin. *The problem is not just what Isaiah says, but what he is.*

And realize this is our problem. The issue is not just what comes out of our mouth, but what’s in our heart.

As Christians we often compare ourselves to other people and get haughty, and smug and self-righteous.

But when I see God, I realize I'm "undone." I don't stack up. It's ironic, the clearer I see God, the more unworthy of Him I know I am. "Not until we see God as He really is do we see ourselves as we truly are!"

It reminds me of Job when he finally saw God. In Job 42:5 he admits, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

What happens next to Isaiah is so encouraging!

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

Realize what happens here. This is an example of amazing grace.

The posts are shaking, the angels are singing, the house of God is smoking... but when Isaiah confesses his sin, all heaven comes to a standstill... God calls off the praise to Himself in order to purge someone's sin.

God sends an angel with a coal from the altar to burn out Isaiah's impurity. We all want to be touched by God. Warmed, comforted, inspired, and strengthened - but notice God's touch first purges and purifies Isaiah.

And this is what God wants to do in us. He knows right where to place the coal - the exact spot to singe.

I once went to the doctor to have a mole removed.

Later I realized I had the wrong mole burned off. God doesn't make those mistakes. He's an exact surgeon.

Isaiah's vision teaches us a truth many people overlook about God's forgiveness. His pardon is both **judicial** and **effectual**. Yes, God tinkers with the heavenly ledgers. My crimes are taken off the books.

But God's pardon also impacts me. It purges me, and actually removes my blemishes and impurities.

Once Isaiah is cleansed, he's in a place where he can hear God speak. He writes, **"Also I heard the voice of the Lord..."** So often I'm asked, **"Sandy, how can I hear God speak?"** The answer is simple, **"You can't miss God's voice when your heart is right toward Him."**

It's sin that creates static on the line. Isaiah is purged and now he hears God clearly. Christians think they need to strain and extend great effort to hear God.

I think it's easier than that. Get your heart right - get specific with your sin, and ask Him to purge you precisely - and His voice will come in loud and clear.

As soon as the angel touches Isaiah's lips with the coal he immediately hears God **"saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"** Notice the Lord refers to Himself in the plural, **"Us."** It's a reference to the Trinity.

Isaiah tells us, **"Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."** Isaiah volunteers without the slightest hesitation!...

When God called Moses he complained he was slow of speech... Jeremiah said he was too young... Gideon was reluctant and needed affirmation... God had to repeat his call to Samuel three times before he replied.

But Isaiah overhears God talking to Himself, “Whom shall I send?” God doesn’t even speak to him directly, yet Isaiah jumps up and shouts to the Lord, “Here am I! Send me.” And in verse 9, “And (God) said, “Go...”

Realize God’s word to us all is “Go!” God desires for us to be His hands and feet in a needy world. He wants us to be His mouthpiece and trumpet His truth.

But before we go there’s first a woe! A “woe is me.”

None of us are fit to be used by God until we’ve first been broken of our pride and purged of our sin. This is why we also all need a fresh, new vision of God.

Again in verse 9 “And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’” We’ve been given good news to share, but *Isaiah* had a tough message.

His audience will neither understand nor appreciate his prophecies. God gives him an unpleasant task.

His ministry will “make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.”

Rather than open the eyes of His people, God is going to use Isaiah to harden His people’s hearts.

And God will use us in similar ways. We glory when God uses us and our message to open *blind* eyes. But at times He uses our words to harden *stubborn* hearts.

God can employ us to *open eyes or shut eyes - open ears or plug ears - turn hearts or sear hearts - bend knees or bow necks*. The same word that brings salvation to one heart, confirms judgment on another.

Isaiah's ministry was not intended to deliver Judah and Jerusalem, but to prepare them for judgment.

Afterwards, Isaiah will supply hope to start over.

To prove how unpopular Isaiah's ministry was in the eyes of his contemporaries, tradition says the prophet was sawn in half by the wicked King Manasseh.

Isaiah died a martyr's death. Hebrews 11 lists OT people who gained God's approval by faith. Verse 37 reads, "*they were sawn in two...*" A reference to Isaiah.

One other point, modern day critics have tried to do to the book of Isaiah what Manasseh actually did to the prophet himself. They've tried to dismember this book.

Because the scope of Isaiah's prophecies are so sweeping, and predict events yet future - liberal critics who doubt the Bible's supernatural origin have tried to deny Isaiah's authorship. They theorize the book was written by two or three men scattered over centuries.

Supposedly, *one Isaiah* wrote the first half of the book - *another* the second. They say its impossible that one author could foretell the future so accurately.

But this theory is easily refuted. John 12:37-41 is a summary of the ministry of Jesus, and in the passage John quotes twice from Isaiah. First, in 53:1 - a verse the critics claim was written by a **second Isaiah**.

Yet in the same passage, John quotes our text, 6:10, what critics claim was written by the **first Isaiah**. But listen as John prefaces verse 39, “Isaiah said again...”

Obviously, John believed the same author quoted both sections of Isaiah. John and the NT authors understood **one Isaiah** wrote all 66 chapters of Isaiah.

Back to our text, verse 11... Isaiah isn't looking forward to the ministry God gave him. He wonders how long he'll have to preach to stubborn people...

“Then I said, “Lord, how long?” “And He answered: “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.”

Isaiah needs to preach until judgment comes - until houses are empty, and cities are without their citizens.

Yet the land will never be totally desolate. There will always be a remnant. “But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down.”

One-tenth of Jews will survive and they'll need God's truth to rebuild. Isaiah will never be without a job.

Notice the last line in chapter 6, “So the holy seed shall be its stump.” Judah was a majestic tree that was chopped down. Only a stump remained. But that stump started to grow again. A remnant of Jews came back from Babylon in 535 BC, and from that stump a Messianic Branch eventually grew - Jesus was born.

Which brings us back to *the Branch of David...*

And sometimes this happens in our lives. God cuts us down to stump size, but even stumps can grow again. God is faithful and committed to our restoration.