

(Isaiah) Conviction, Cleansing, and Call

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores Isaiah's vision of God's holiness and sovereignty, emphasizing the need for personal cleansing and divine calling.

Duration: 1:02:08

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-2, Isaiah 6:9-11, Isaiah 6:13, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Divine Encounter", "Spiritual Humility"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of adoration and humility before God. He references Charles Spurgeon's teachings on the significance of four wings for adoration and two for active energy. The speaker then discusses Isaiah's encounter with God, highlighting the details of the location and time to emphasize the reality of the event. The presence of God is depicted through shaking posts and filling the house with smoke, reminiscent of the pillar of cloud and God's glory in the temple. Isaiah's response to this encounter is a deep sense of unworthiness and recognition of his own sinfulness.

Transcript

Isaiah chapter 6, beginning at verse 1. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim, each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

The first two verses of this chapter tell us what Isaiah saw in this heavenly vision. Maybe I should say that the first line tells us when he saw it. He saw it in the year that King Uzziah died.

The King Uzziah of Judah had a long and distinguished reign. It's described in 2 Chronicles chapters 26 and in 2 Kings chapter 15. Uzziah began his reign when he was only 15 years old.

He reigned 52 years, and overall he was a good king. 2 Kings 15.3 says that he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. And in 2 Chronicles chapter 28, it says that he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

Uzziah was also a man who was a mighty military leader of the nation of Judah. He also led Israel in military victories over the Philistines and other neighboring nations. He was a strong king, an energetic builder, a planner, and a general.

2 Chronicles chapter 26 says that his fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly. Marvelous king. Tremendous reign.

Uzziah's life ended tragically. 2 Chronicles 26.16 reads, but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. You see, Uzziah was a king, and he was forbidden to participate in the priestly service.

He was forbidden to offer sacrifices or to burn incense at the sacred altar of incense, which stood inside the holy place, not the holy of holies of the temple, but in the room of the temple, which priests would go in and out every day to take care of the lamps and to burn incense. And Uzziah, being a king, was forbidden to enter in there and to conduct priestly service. But one day, strong in himself and lifted up in pride, he transgressed.

He went to a place that he shouldn't have gone. He crossed a barrier that he shouldn't have crossed. And in response, God struck Uzziah with leprosy.

There's the priest shouting at him, don't go in there, King. You don't belong in there. And Uzziah, strong in himself and lifted up in his pride, thinking that there is no barrier to him.

I'm a king. I can go anywhere I want. This is my nation, my city, my temple.

But it wasn't his. It was the temple of the Lord. And he transgressed that.

And as the priests are trying to keep him out, he barges in. And as soon as he enters in, his body is stricken from head to toe with leprosy. Immediately.

He was an isolated leper until the day he died. So when Isaiah begins, Isaiah chapter six, verse one, with the phrase in the year that King Uzziah died, it means something. It says a lot.

It says in the year that a great and wise king died. But it also says in the year that a great and wise king who had a tragic end died. And Isaiah had great reason to be discouraged and disillusioned at the death of King Uzziah because a great king had passed away and because his life had ended tragically.

He could ask the question fairly, where is the Lord in all of this? Well, where was the Lord? Look at verse one, sitting on a throne high and lifted up in the train of his robe filled with. Where was the Lord in all this? He was sitting on a throne. God was still enthroned in heaven and God was in charge of all creation.

I find it fascinating when you go through the Bible and study the accounts that men have brought forth of their own visions of heaven, of their own encounters in heaven. You talk about Paul, you talk about John, you talk about Daniel, you talk about Zechariah, you talk about Isaiah here and what they see when they go to heaven is a throne. There's a throne in heaven and the Lord God sits upon it as the sovereign ruler of the universe.

This is the central fact of heaven, that there is an occupied throne in heaven. God does not sit on a chair in heaven like the hired help or somebody who just needs a rest from a long day of work. Anyone might sit on a chair, but a sovereign sits on the throne.

Judges sits on thrones. Those with proper authority and sovereignty sit on thrones. So just like the prophet Micaiah, just like David, just like the sons of Korah, just like Ethan to Ezra, just like Jeremiah, just like

Ezekiel, just like Daniel, just like the apostle John, they all saw heaven and they all saw God sitting upon his throne.

By the way, if there's any book in the Bible that shows us heaven and gives us an interior view of what heaven's all about, it's the book of Revelation. Well, God's throne is specifically mentioned more than 35 times in the book of Revelation, the book of the throne. Now, when we think about the competing world philosophies in the day, when we think of atheism or materialism.

They believe that there is no throne, that there is no seat of authority or power, that all the universe must answer to, that there is no authority, there's no power. Everybody just has their own throne. You have your throne.

I have my throne. Everybody has their own throne. And then it's just whoever is the strongest or smartest, they get to rule over others.

The bottom line of humanism is that there is a throne, but man sits upon it, not God. The Bible makes it clear that there is a throne in heaven and no fallen man sits upon it, but the Lord God is enthroned in heaven. So we can just see Isaiah depressed, discouraged because a great leader of Judah was no longer on the throne, but God in heaven now shows Isaiah, don't worry about it, Isaiah.

Uzziah may not be on his throne, but I am on my throne. And as we notice it here in verse one, he's high and lifted up. His throne is exalted and majestic.

The throne set its occupant in a superior position. When you see the throne of God, you will know that he's greater than you, greater than the angels, greater than all. Matter of fact, his greatness is illustrated in verse one by the idea of his train of the robe fills the temple.

Now, kings of that time would wear robes with long trains, you know what the train is, it's the long flowing part, sort of the unnecessary part, it doesn't do anything for covering, it's just there for glory, for splendor. But the only thing we think of having trained today is bridal gowns, right? You see the bride there, big, long train, it's so long that she's got three or four kids behind her, you know, all dressed up, taking care of the train. And what does it mean? It means that she's in her glory.

It means that she's object of special attention, it means that she's not doing any work. Bride's not out there chopping wood with the big train on her temple, she's not there doing work in the kitchen, hopefully with the big train on her dress. Wearing a long train meant I'm important enough, I don't have to work, I'm a person of honor and dignity, others must serve me and wait upon me.

And how long is the train of God's robe? It fills the temple. I've never seen a bridal dress of the train that long, you know, you think of TV weddings, big, big, long train, I've never seen one. Now, God is so honored, so important, so dignified that the train of his robe fills the temple.

That's not all that Isaiah saw, look at verse two above it, speaking of the throne, above it stood Seraphim, each one had six wings, with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, with two he flew. Surrounding the throne of God are angels known here as Seraphim. Now, in many other passages, these angels are described and known as Cherubim, or Revelation chapter four refers to them as the living creatures surrounding the throne.

This is the only chapter in the Bible where they are referred to as Seraphim. Now, you'll get some Bible scholars and boy, do they like to make a debate. Let me explain to you, they say the difference between Cherubim and Seraphim and they say, well, they're different beings.

I don't think so. I've done careful study on this. You compare Ezekiel chapter one, verse 13, Ezekiel chapter 10, verse 15, this passage here, I'm firmly convinced Cherubim or Seraphim are the same thing.

The name Seraphim means burning ones. And so when Isaiah makes a reference here to these burning ones, he speaks of their appearance being a flame of fire. And it says that each one had six wings.

Revelation chapter four, the apostle John also mentions these six wings in here and Isaiah says that with the six wings, each one covers their face with two of the wings. They cover their feet to show two wings with two wings and then with the other two wings, they fly. Four of the six wings are given to express humility on behalf of that being covering their face.

I cannot look upon you, Lord. By the way, that just simply blows my mind. Now, I understand when God says to men, no man shall look upon me and live.

I understand that. We're fallen humanity. These are perhaps the most glorious beings in all of God's creation and they cannot look upon.

Now, when we are glorified in heaven, we will be raised to a position of glory higher than even the Seraphim and we will be able to look upon the Lord. But when we look at the Seraphim, we won't even see their faces. Their faces are going to be covered with wings.

They can't look upon the Lord. So with two, they cover their face, with two they cover their feet, sort of, if you will, the human part, the part that comes into contact with everything. It's an expression of their humility.

Four of the six wings are used to show their humility and two of them are used to show their willingness to serve. We'll fly anywhere you want us to, God. We're ready to serve.

We'll go. We've got our track shoes on, so to speak. We're ready to go wherever you want us, God, here, there, anywhere we're ready.

Friends, isn't it significant that four of the six are used to express adoration and humiliation before God, two of them are to serve. Charles Spurgeon wrote, Thus, they have four wings for adoration and two for active energy, four to conceal themselves and two with which to occupy themselves in service. And we may learn from them that we shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverend and humbled in his presence.

Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigor. Adoration must exceed activity. As Mary at Jesus's feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving, so sacred reverence take the first place in energetic service to follow.

That's what Isaiah saw. What did he hear? Look at verses three and four. And one cried to the other and said.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory and the doors of the post of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out and the house was filled with smoke. I don't think it's

interesting that the seraphim aren't even addressing the Lord. They're not speaking to him.

They're speaking to one another. They're proclaiming the glorious nature and character of God to one another in the presence of the Lord. It's as if the holy is the Lord and you bet he's holy.

Yes, he's holy. They're declaring the greatness of God to one another. And they say it over and over again, three times.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. Why three times? Isn't it once just to say it once? No, it's not enough. Say it three times because there are three persons in the one God and the father is holy and the son is holy and the Holy Spirit is holy.

Friends, they also say it to intensify the idea in the Hebrew language, intensity is communicated by repetition. It isn't like they would say, well, he's holy, holier, holiest, instead of going holy, holier, holiest, they'd be more likely to say, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, and let the repetition express the strength of it. To say that the Lord is holy is to say something.

To say that he is holy, holy says far more to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord is to declare his holiness in the highest possible. What does it mean to say that God is holy? Holiness at its root has the idea of a partness. It describes someone or something which is set apart from other people or other things, an object can be set apart if it's set apart for sacred service, a microphone, if it's only used to sing songs of worship, you would say that microphone is holy unto the singing of worship and something is set apart for a purpose, set apart unto something unique, then it can be regarded as holy.

And when God says he's holy, he is set apart from, well, from what? Number one, he's set apart from creation. The Lord God is not a creature and he exists outside of all creation. If all creation were to dissolve, if every molecule of matter were to perish in the entire creation, God would still exist unaffected.

He doesn't depend on anything. You think God breathes, you think God drinks water, thinks he needs to eat food. God is not dependent on anything.

But he's not only set apart from creation, the Lord God is also set apart from humanity. His nature, his essence is divine. It is not human.

God is not a superman or the ultimate man. It's not as if he's just smarter than any man or stronger than any man or older than any man or better than any man. You can't measure God on man's chart at all.

He's divine and we're human. He's set apart from us. Now, I know most of the time when we hear about the holiness of God, we expect it to make us feel a certain way.

Usually, I expect it to make me feel condemned. I mean, if I said tonight I'm going to preach on holiness and for a long night here tonight and obviously the holiness of God demands a moral holiness and a moral purity from us, there's no doubt about that. It shouldn't be diminished or or separate at all.

But friends, if we understand the fullness of what holiness is, we understand that the idea of moral purity is just one small aspect of what the holiness of the Lord is all about. When we say that the Lord is holy, we are saying that God has a moral purity, a sinlessness, a spotlessness that is far above any man, that is unlike any man, that is separate and apart from any man's. We understand that.

But you realize that it also means that God has a love that is separate from any man's, a forgiveness that's separate from any man's, a graciousness that's separate from any man's, a mercy and a forgiveness that's greater than any man's. Holiness just doesn't refer to the moral purity of God. It refers to everything in his nature.

God's holiness is a part of everything he is and everything he does. God's power is a holy power. God's love is a holy love.

God's wisdom is a holy wisdom. Holiness is not an aspect of God's personality. It's one characteristic of his entire being.

Not only that, not only is he holy, but look at verse three, and the whole earth is full. I think it's funny that the seraphim probably see that more clearly than we who live on the earth see it. I mean, they probably know it far more.

We probably have very little sense of the greatness of the glory of God all around us. If we could only see it, if our eyes were only opened, if the veil was taken away to see the glory of God, the power and the majesty of his in creation, in redemption, in all of his unfathomable work, the whole earth is full of his glory. When the angel said that, look at what happened in verse four.

And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out in the house was filled with smoke. The seraphim are pretty majestic beings, friends. What they say carries weight.

You picture Isaiah standing by the posts of the door here, of this great room, of this great temple. And there he is in front of these doorposts as the angels are crying out, holy, holy, holy. It echoes across the room.

And it's such a strong word. There's such mighty beings that it's shaking the temple. Friends, this is not some little prefab shack here, some little big trailer tent here.

This is the Lord God's temple in heaven. I think it's built up to code and all of that to shake those posts. Man, you're doing something.

And there's Isaiah, everything's shaking. It's like an earthquake there. And it may be that he could feel the doorpost shake.

And this isn't the word of the Lord. This is just the word of the seraphim. These are majestic, mighty beings.

And these majestic, incredible beings, perhaps the highest beings in all of God's creation, they have one occupation. Their existence is given over to the praise and worship and honor of the Lord God who's enthroned. What could we possibly do that's a higher? They sang so powerfully that the doorposts were shaking.

And it makes us feel silly the way we sing sometimes, right? La, la, la, la, that's not how the angels praise God. They sang so powerfully, the doorposts were shaking. Let me ask you a simple question.

Do those angels surrounding the throne of God, do they have more to thank God for than you do? And I don't know why our praise is so wimpy sometimes. Our praise wouldn't shake a piece of tissue paper right in front of our mouth. And they're shaking the post of the temple, verse four, and the post of the door were

shaken by the voice of him and cried out and the house is filled with smoke.

The smoke reminds us of the pillar of cloud that represented the presence of God. The smoke on Mount Sinai, the cloud of God's kind of glory that filled the temple, a cloud of glory often marks the presence of the Lord. And in the midst of all this, look at what Isaiah felt here.

Verse five. Then I said, woe to me, for I am undone because I'm 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.

What made Isaiah feel like he was coming apart? Two things. First, it was the sight and the sound of the seraphim. When Isaiah saw those angels in all of their holy humility and all of their obedience and all of their praise to God, he realized not only am I not like the Lord, I'm not even like these angels.

They cry out, holy, holy, holy. They praise God so beautifully. This is I don't.

I am a man of unclean lips. I cannot say holy, holy, holy the way they do. They're holy.

I'm not. The first thing that made him feel like he was coming apart was he saw the angels. But the second thing was that he saw the Lord and he saw the Lord.

He knew what kind of man he was. As poorly as he compared to the seraphim, that was nothing in relation to how he compared to the Lord. This vision or actual experience of the throne of God, friends, it did not make Isaiah feel good.

He didn't have a peaceful, easy feeling there in the temple. The more clearly he saw the Lord, the more clearly he saw how bad his state was. But that's no surprise.

Job felt it when he was in the presence of the Lord. Daniel felt it in the presence of the Lord. Peter felt it in the presence of the Lord.

John felt it in the presence of the Lord. Maybe when he cries out, I am undone. That's not a bad place to be.

I don't think God will do anything with us until he's undone us first. What makes him think he's undone? Look at verse five. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

Isaiah saw his sinfulness and the sinfulness of his people, mainly in terms of sinful speech. Now, Isaiah did not think for a moment that this was his only sin. But he saw that this was an example of the great and incurable disease of sin and in his people.

He had a lip problem. I am a man of unclean lips. By nature, our lips are full of flattery and false intent.

Psalms 12, two says, with flattering lips and a double heart, they speak by nature. Our lips lie and are proud. Psalm 31 says, Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contentiously against the righteous.

By nature, our lips deceive. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. That's Psalm 34.

By nature, our lips are violent. Psalm 59 says, Swords are in their lips. By nature, our lips bring death to others.

Psalms 140 says, The poison of snakes is under their lips. A lot of damage as much as that. Look at the end of verse five.

This is where my eyes have seen the king. Isaiah was a righteous, godly man by all outward appearance. Yet when he saw the enthroned king, the lord of hosts, he saw how sinful he was in comparison.

Isaiah was a righteous man, you looked at his life, there's a godly man, you got nothing to be ashamed of. Isaiah, go ahead, stand before the Lord. He says, No, no.

When you put my life next to the king of glory, it's nothing. You take a diamond and you look at it, you know, just in the light background, it looks pretty good. You put it against a black velvet background and suddenly flaws that you never saw before become apparent.

Imperfections, little difficulties, oh, now I see them now. Isaiah could see those flaws and perfections that were invisible before. God will not leave him there.

Look at verse six. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he'd 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.

Now, what does he do? He takes that coal from the altar and this must be heaven's version of the altar of incense that set before the holy of holies. In the earthly tabernacle that God told Moses to build, it was a model of what there was in heaven and in the earthly tabernacle before the holy of holies stood the altar of incense and on it were burning coals that would receive the incense and burn it upon it and raise it up as beautiful smoke unto God. By the way, isn't it beautiful? There's an altar in heaven.

That's the place for us. The throne isn't for us, that's for God. The altar, that's for us.

We need the altar. A lot of us need to get off the throne and get down on the altar. Leave the throne to God.

The altar is where we belong. What does he do? He takes that burning hot coal from the altar and he touches Isaiah's lips with it. Now, friends, can I just tell you that must have hurt.

You don't take a burning hot coal, put it on a person's lips, which is one of the most sensitive parts of a person's body, and it hurts. But look at verse seven. Does it say anything about Isaiah reacting in pain? And the prophetess screamed, ouch, you're not going to read it in there.

There was no pain. Why? Perhaps it was a special, unique blessing from God, or maybe it was that the pain did not matter because of the majesty of the surroundings and the goodness of the cleansing. That's what mattered to Isaiah.

Isaiah knew that he did not serve the Lord like the seraphim. What does seraphim mean? Burning ones. So God says, I'm going to light a fire in you.

I'm going to make you like one of these burning ones. And that's why a burning coal was used to purify Isaiah. You know what I think is amazing? There is a cry of pain.

There is a cry of agony in this chapter. But it's back at verse five, before the burning coal. Woe is me, for I am undone.

Isaiah was more pained at the vision of a holy God than he was at having a burning coal applied to his lips. And that's what it's like to see the Lord and to see yourself. So it says there in verse seven, your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged.

Isaiah's sin had to be burned away. The fire of judgment was applied to his place of sin. And it burned away, even as the fire of God was put upon our Savior, Jesus Christ, the wrath of God.

It burned away our sin. Once Isaiah had met with the Lord and been convicted of his sin and cleansed from his guilt, now he's ready to serve God. Charles Spurgeon said the effect of that live coal will be to fire the lip with a heavenly flame.

Oh, says one man, a flaming coal will burn the lips so that I cannot speak at all. That's just how God works with us. It's by consuming the fleshly power that he inspires the heavenly might.

Oh, let the lip be burnt, but the fleshly power of eloquence be destroyed. But oh, for that live coal to make the tongue eloquent with the heavens flame, the true divine power which urged the apostles forward and made them conquerors of the whole world. That's where we come to verse eight.

Also, 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. God looked. God looked all around.

He looked all around. He looked for someone to send. He wanted someone to go.

Now, on the one hand, this absolutely just it's almost not really almost troubling to me. That God in heaven asks a question. What does he ask a question about? What doesn't he know? What questions would he have? God was asking for a person.

Because God wants to reach the world through people and he wants willing people. It isn't that God doesn't know who these people are. It's that God is waiting for ready hearts to reveal themselves.

But do you understand here? Is there any more majestic, sovereign picture we have of God in the old scriptures here? High and lifted up the train of his robe fills the temple. Holy, holy, holy doorpost shake and smoke everywhere. And what does God say? Do I have any volunteers? Volunteers.

Friends, a God like that doesn't need volunteers. He can command anyone he wants. But he asks for volunteers.

He could create robots to do his work. He could command angels to carry out his will. But he wants willing, surrendered servants.

Friends, have you been waiting for God to force you to serve him? OK, God, when you make me, then I will. OK, Lord. You know, just when it gets so heavy.

What do you do waiting for God to force you? You're going to wait a long time. God wants willing hearts. He's looking for volunteers.

God says, who shall I send? That means that the missionary, the Christian worker, the witness of Jesus Christ is sent. This is a divine commission. And notice who will go for us.

It means that the missionary, the Christian worker, the witness of Jesus Christ has decided to go. There's a divine commission. There's a human will to go.

So Isaiah says, here I am, send me. Isaiah emphatically answered God's call. He didn't hesitate.

Isn't it glorious? Isaiah wanted to be the answer to God's question. Do you want to be the answer to God's question? God's asking a question. You can answer it.

What created this kind of heart in Isaiah? First, he had a heart that had been in the presence of God. Secondly, he had a heart that knew its own sinfulness. Third, he had a heart that knew the need among the people, a need for God's word, not the word of sinful lips.

And then he had a heart that had been touched by God's cleansing fire. And finally, he had a heart that heard God's heart to reach the nations. What does Isaiah say? Here am I. Send me.

You see, send me is the attitude of a servant submitted unto the Lord. It doesn't say here I am, Lord, I will go. OK, I'll go.

That has a little more of the self in it, doesn't it? It says I'll go, but only if you will send me. Isaiah would not go at all unless he knew he was sent by the Lord. There are many people who are quick to say, here I am, I will go.

How few there are that will wait for the Lord to send them. Now, when his ministry. Here's your ministry.

Send me. Yes, Lord, I'm pumped. I got the heavenly call, the heavenly vision.

I'm excited. I've received it. I've got it all.

Yes, here we go. Tell me my ministry. Lord, all this is going to be great.

Yes, I'm ready. Verse nine. And he said, go and tell this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and shut their eyes. Lest they see with their eyes and hear at their ears and understand their heart and return and be healed.

You see what the Lord says to Isaiah in response? The first thing he says is go. When you say here am I send me to the Lord, you know what he's going to answer back? Go in some way or another. He's going to say go.

He may say, go and serve me here or go and serve me there or go and be prepared for future service. But there's always a go when we offer ourselves to the Lord. What does he say? Go and tell these people, keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Do you understand what he's getting at? God told Isaiah to go and preach to a people who would not respond. Isn't that great? What a ministry.

Go and preach to a bunch of hard hearted people who won't respond and hardly any of them will get saved and repent. Go. There's your mission.

Oh, well, Lord, why am I going? So that their guilt would be certain. One old Puritan commentator, you know, it's going to be heavy when it's an old Puritan commentator. He said that Isaiah's ministry was to preach them to hell because of their rejection.

I mean, he would offer them heaven. But as they rejected it, it sealed their fate to hell. And that was basically Isaiah's ministry.

Go and preach them to hell. Now, what preacher could be satisfied with a ministry that made the heart of the people dull and their ears heavy and shut their eyes? Now, believe me, I've sat in some preachers like that, but no preacher satisfied with that. Believe me, the people might not be satisfied with it.

Isaiah might not be satisfied with it, but God would be satisfied with it. So go and do it. So look at Isaiah's response here in verse 11.

Then I said, Lord, how long? How long do I got to do this kind of ministry? What is this, Lord? That's a logical question from anybody who's given that kind of commission. I have to preach to those who will not hear and the rejection of my ministry will ultimately seal their doom. How long do I have to do that? How long? Verse 11.

Then he answered. Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitants, their houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate. The Lord has removed the men far away and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

Yet a tenth will be in it and will return and be for consuming as a terebinth tree or an oak whose stump remains when it's cut down. So the holy seed shall be at stump. Basic answer, preach until destruction comes.

Thank you, Lord. That's the commission, yet it's also preach in hope of restoration of remnant. Did you see verse 13? But yet a tenth will be in it.

There's your ministry, Isaiah. Ninety percent of the people you preach to, you're going to preach them to hell. Ten percent, you'll preach them to heaven.

Friends, it's just plain glorious to the submitted heart of Isaiah. Now, if this is what happened in the days of Uzziah or after Isaiah was dead, Uzziah was dead. What happened with the king after him? Take a look at chapter seven.

Now, it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah. Again, this is the grandson of Uzziah. Are you picking something up about the book of Isaiah? We're not strictly chronological here.

We're jumping place to place. We passed from the days of Jotham, who succeeded Uzziah, now we're to the days of Jotham's son, Ahaz. It came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin and king of Syria and Pekah and of Ramoth-gilead, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against, but could not prevail against it.

And it was told of the house of David saying, Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim. So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind. This takes place in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham.

Ahaz, what kind of king was he over Judah? Terrible, a wicked man. The only good thing that man ever did was have a son and his name was Hezekiah, who turned out to be a godly king. One commentator says he was a cowardly, superstitious and hypocritical leader.

One of the worst kings Judah ever had. And what happened to Ahaz? Well, the king of Syria and the king of Israel. Again, remember, there's a division here.

Judah to the south, Israel to the north. The king of Syria and the king of Israel joined forces, combined, and they attack the nation of Judah. That's a lot of brotherly love between the northern nation of Israel and Judah.

Right. So what do they do? They attack. Now, friends, their attack paid a great price in the land of Judah.

Oh, my friends, you'll find this in Second Kings, Chapter 16 and in Second Chronicles, Chapter 28. Now, their attack on Jerusalem was ultimately unsuccessful, but the war against Judah took a great toll against the southern kingdom. Second Chronicles 28 documents the damage.

It says that the king of Israel killed one hundred and twenty thousand of the best troops of Judah. Friends, one hundred and twenty thousand. That's a lot.

It says that the Syrians and the men of Israel took tens of thousands of captives, prisoners out of the land of Judah. Judah was laid waste and then the armies were advancing on Jerusalem. So I want you to get the picture, the scene here of Isaiah, Chapter seven.

Judah has been desolated by these armies and now they're marching on Jerusalem. This is the last stand. If they conquer Jerusalem, everything's gone.

It's already been bad enough, but pretty soon everything's going to be gone. And so as the events of this chapter unfold, the nation has faced a terrible calamity. It's devastated as the combined armies of Israel and Syria approach Jerusalem.

It looks like everything is going to be lost. So, you know what God's message is to Ahaz, check it out in a few verses. But notice this, this is this is troubling to us here in the way we think in our minds.

Look at at the end of verse one. They went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. It's like, well, great.

He just told you the end of the story. I mean, verse one basically has the whole story right there. Now, this is a very Hebraic way of writing.

You tell the story, give a quick synopsis, then you tell it again. It's not strictly chronological. So we know at the beginning here, Jerusalem was not conquered by these armies.

It looked bad, but they were not conquered. Why? How was Ahaz saved from this attack? You know how? He entered into an ungodly alliance with the king of Assyria, not Syria, Assyria. He sold himself out to the king of Assyria and had them come in and bring protection.

He gave them he gave the king of Assyria articles and treasures from the temple to buy him off. And to get his help, and so he was saved. And by the way, when he went to meet his new pagan master, this king of Assyria, he saw the altars and the temples in the city of Damascus.

And he said, oh, this is neat. And he went home and remodeled stuff in Jerusalem to imitate the pagan temples. Ahaz is a powerful, extreme example of someone who entered into an ungodly alliance for good reasons.

See it from his point of view. Hey, I had to protect Jerusalem, had to save the city, right? Come on, what do you want me to do? I don't have any other option. The armies are coming.

They're going to encircle us. I got to make friends while I can. I mean, come on, help me out.

Sure, he's a pagan king, but I need his help. Now, it's important to understand that the events of the rest of this chapter happened before Ahaz made the final decision to put his trust in the Assyrian king. We're told the end result of it, they could not prevail against it.

But friends, Isaiah is telling us the end result here before the prophecies of this chapter. So now we've got a backtrack here. Verse two tells us the armies are on the way.

They're going to encircle Jerusalem. Everybody's afraid. You get the picture there from verse two.

Now, let's check this out here. Verse three. Then the Lord said, Isaiah, go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shir Jashub, your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field, and say to him, you know what? Let me just stop right there.

You know what? Very quickly, because I could just go on and on about this. Don't you love that? Don't you love that? Take your son at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool of the highway to the Fuller's Field. You know what that means, friends? These seemingly irrelevant details make an important point.

All this happened to real people at real times and in real places. This is not make believe. This is not fairy tales.

It's just as much as, well, you know, there I was. And, you know, it was downtown L.A. at the corner of this and that, you know, same thing. This isn't once upon a time, you know, we don't have bears in the forest and bread crumbs and, you know, witches in the house and gingerbread things and all that.

This is for real. So here's the word. Verse four, and say to him, take heed and be quiet and do not fear, be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of resin and Syria and the son of Ramaliah, because Syria, Ephraim and the son of Ramaliah have taken evil counsel against you, saying, let us go up to Judah and trouble and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves and let us set a king over them.

The son of Tabeel, Isaiah says to King Ahaz, wake up, King, take heed, listen up, take courage, do not fear, be fainthearted. By the way, I think maybe Ahaz has really given up anything in the Lord now. He's saying, look at my country.

I got one hundred twenty thousand men dead. I got more taken captive. Now those same armies are advancing on Jerusalem.

The Lord hasn't helped me so far. Forget about the Lord. I'm looking other places.

I got to call into the king of Assyria. Maybe he'll help me because the Lord hasn't helped me so far. It's time to take matters into my own hands.

And Isaiah is coming and warns that don't do it. Don't do it. Why? Take a look at it here.

He says, because verse four. There are two stubs of smoking firebrands. You know what that means? God is describing for Ahaz what his two enemies are like.

Now, he saw them as two balls of fire coming in to destroy and wreck everything. Here they come. Great burning balls of fire.

You know what God says? They're burned out smoking torches. They're like a match that's been burned up. That's real threatening, isn't it? The burnt stub of a match.

That's what these are like. You see fire. God tells Ahaz, Ahaz, you see fire.

All I see is smoke. They look like firebrands, but they're not. They're just smoking.

And God says it shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass. And certainly the king of Israel and the king of Syria had their plans. They've taken evil counsel against Judah.

They wanted to attack Jerusalem. They wanted to defeat the capital of Judah. And then they wanted to depose Ahaz and set up their own king.

But God was not worried about their plans. They look like big flaming threats to Ahaz. But God says, look, I see two stubs of smoking firebrands.

And it shall not stand, shall not come to pass. Don't worry about it, Ahaz. Ahaz, you don't have to make the deal with the king of Assyria.

Don't go there. I'll protect you. It's not going to happen.

That's quite a promise, isn't it? Look at it here in verse seven. Thus says the Lord God. Shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass.

He means the plans of Israel and Syria against Judah. Those plans will not come to pass. It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass.

For the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezan. Within 65 years, Ephraim will be broken so that it will not be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is Ramali, his son.

If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. This was God's challenge to Ahaz. God promised.

Now you have to believe, King Ahaz. Now, if you won't believe, what will happen? You know, it's very interesting about this. Ahaz didn't believe, did he? He went out and he trusted in the king of Assyria.

That's the basket he put his eggs in. He didn't believe in the Lord. He believed in the king of Assyria.

He gave articles from the temple of the Lord to the king of Assyria. He wasn't trusting in God. He trusted in the king of Assyria.

And you know what? Jerusalem was still delivered. Whoa, wait a minute. That didn't happen, right? If he will not believe, it wouldn't affect the outcome of the attack of Jerusalem.

God had already decreed that their attack would not succeed, but it would affect the course of Ahaz's life and reign as king. And so Jerusalem was spared, and I bet Ahaz left it thinking he was successful. Yeah, it worked.

It worked. My trust in the king of Assyria. That was a brilliant plan I had.

Look, it worked. But if he would have trusted in the Lord, Jerusalem would have been spared just the same and he would have been blessed. Now, why did Isaiah bring his son, Shear-Jashub, because his name means a remnant shall return and God wanted Ahaz to know that because of the kind of ungodly trust he was putting in the king of Assyria, Judah would be eventually taken into captivity and only a remnant would return.

So here's my son, King Ahaz, a remnant shall return. That's his name. He's your object lesson for the day.

Poor kid had to go with that name the rest of his life. This is a good object lesson. Verse 10, Moreover, the Lord spoke against Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God.

Ask it either in the depth or in the height above. Isn't that interesting? Give me a sign. Look, I want you to trust me.

Trust me, Ahaz, God is pleading with you. Trust me, Ahaz, I can deliver you from these armies. You don't have to lean on the king of the Assyrians.

Trust me. And then God says, Ask for a sign, I'll give you something. Isn't that remarkable? It's hard to think of another passage in scriptures quite like this.

I mean, in Malachi, you have the passage where God says, you know, give unto me, prove me in this and see what I'll give back unto you. Yeah, that passage there in Malachi. But it's heavy for God to say, you know, here, here, ask a sign, I'll give you one and look at his response.

Verse 12, Ahaz said, I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord. And why do you think Ahaz said that? You think he was such a godly man that he said, oh, I trust you so much, Lord. I don't need a sign.

I don't need to test you, Lord. Do you think that's why he was doing it? No. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign.

You know why? Because when God fulfilled the sign, he knew he'd be obligated to believe. And so he says, I'd rather not ask for the sign. I won't ask for it because then I'd be obligated to believe.

Friends, God was inviting him for a sign and he wanted no part of it. Now, I wonder if Ahaz wasn't bitter against the Lord some way. You know, maybe he looks at the whole land of Judah and all the devastation that's been wrought, 120,000 casualties on the field of battle, tens of thousands carried away into captivity.

And maybe Ahaz is saying, you know what, Lord, you haven't helped me up to now. I don't think I'm going to trust you to help me from here on out. Forget it.

That's the wrong attitude. God was there to help. Verse 13.

Then he said, Here now, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men? It is a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? I love it. Isaiah's just getting a little fed up here. Listen, listen, it's one thing for you to weary me.

It's another thing for you to weary God. The rulers of Judah treated other people poorly, but they treated the Lord God even more poorly. You know, I think about it sometimes if we express the same distrust we have towards the Lord, towards other people, we might just get a punch in the nose sometimes.

I mean, think about it. You know, come on over to my house for dinner. I'll do anything.

And you come on over and you've got like two sacks of groceries and a pizza and a couple bags of McDonald's. Why did you bring all that stuff? Well, I wasn't sure you were really going to feed me when I came over just to be safe. I thought I'd bring my own.

What do you say? Get out of my house. I'm glad you come. I told you I provide all your needs.

And here you are, you go out and you do it. What is this? Get out of here. I don't want you around here.

Don't we do the same thing to the Lord? If we showed the same kind of distrust towards one another that we show towards the Lord. And I tell you, we'd get some punches in the mouth. One thing's a weary man that way, but will you weary my God also? Verse 14, therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. Curds and honey he shall eat. And he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. The Lord will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house. Days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah.

Oh, friends, what a prophecy here. Here's your other sign. Ahaz, here's the sign.

A virgin is going to conceive and bring forth a child. They'll call his name Immanuel. Don't you think you're scratching his head? Wait a minute.

How is this a sign to Ahaz? This happened 600 years later. We know who Immanuel is. We sing it every Christmas.

This is Jesus. Friends, this is one of the most famous prophecies regarding the birth of Jesus, the sign in the Bible. But it also illustrates an important principle of prophecy.

The prophecy may have a near fulfillment and a far fulfillment. Spurgeon said of this passage that it's said to be one of the most difficult in all the word of God. It may be so.

I certainly did not think it was until I saw what the commentators had to say about it. And then I rose up from reading them perfectly confused, Spurgeon said. He said that when you just read it, you know, it's Jesus.

All right. Praise the Lord. And you go on.

Well, he said, you know, the commentator feels your head. Well, what is it, friends? The near fulfillment of this prophecy centered around Ahaz, around Jerusalem and the attack from Israel and Syria. For Ahaz,

the prophecy center on a time span for before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her cousins.

Simply put, God would give Ahaz a sign that within a few years, both Israel and Syria would be crushed. This was a sign of deliverance to Ahaz. And I think that it's very possible that we're not told of its specific fulfillment and may have been fulfilled in a near sense right there in Isaiah's day.

Maybe there was a woman in the royal court who was a virgin, unmarried. And then very soon after this, she was married. She gave birth and they called the child's name Immanuel quite spontaneously.

And Ahaz said, oh my. And before that child, just a few years later, within a few years before he's matured very much, both Israel and Syria are crushed. And it was God shouting to Ahaz, hey, look, you should have believed me.

That was the near fulfillment. What about the far or the ultimate fulfillment? Well, you know where that's fulfilled. We know that this passage speaks of Jesus.

Do you know how we know? Because the Holy Spirit tells us Matthew chapter one, verse twenty three. Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel, which is translated God with us. This spoke Isaiah, the prophet referring to Jesus Christ, Matthew says in Matthew chapter twenty one.

So the Bible tells us that this passage refers to Jesus. Case settled. That's all there is to it.

We also know that the passage speaks to Jesus because the prophecy is addressed not only to Ahaz. Look at who the prophecy is addressed to. Verse 13.

Here now, O house of David. It's not just made to Ahaz, it's made to the whole house of David, to the whole lineage of David. We know this passage speaks of Jesus because it says the virgin shall conceive.

Now, in a near sense, in a vague sense. Well, you know, she was a virgin when the prophecy was made. But we know that in an ultimate sense, there's no doubt about it, that it means that this would be a miraculous conception where Mary, the mother of Jesus, would miraculously conceive and give birth to a child having never had relations with a man.

Now, those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus. By the way, did you know that there are people who call themselves Christians and deny the virgin birth of Jesus? I just don't know what to do with that. What do you do with something so plainly stated by? And you just say it's not true.

I don't get it. What do you do with that? I mean, is it? When they say that they they say, well, look, the Hebrew word for virgin here, it can also be translated young woman. And so Isaiah was just saying a young woman would give birth, not a virgin.

Well, I'll admit the near fulfillment, it may just be referring to a young woman. But you know what? When this Bible was translated into Greek, they use the Greek word Parthenos to refer to this word Alma. And that word categorically means virgin.

No doubt about it. When it's quoted in the New Testament, it categorically means virgin. There's no doubt about it.

But most of all, we know that this passage speaks of Jesus because it says that he will be known as God with us. I know some people have said, you know, wait a minute. His name wasn't Emmanuel.

His name was Jesus. Francis talking about Emmanuel as a title. He was never called by the name Emmanuel that we ever read of.

But the meaning of his name is affirmed and acknowledged and fully made good in him because he is God with us. He's united to us. He's God with us in his incarnation.

He's with us in the preaching of the word. He's with us in prayer. He's with us in every action in our life.

He's with us to comfort, to enlighten, to protect, to defend us in every time of temptation and the hour of trial and to defend us in the hour of death and the day of judgment. God with us and in us and we with and in him for all of eternity. He's Emmanuel, the Lord with us.

So here's your sign wrapping up here. Verse 18. It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will whistle for the fly that's in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that's in the land of Assyria, they will come and all of them will rest in the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks and on the thorns and all the pastures.

And the same day, the Lord will shave with a hired razor, with those from beyond the river, with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the legs and also remove the beard. It shall be in that day that a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep. So it shall be from the abundance of milk that they give, that he will eat curds for curds and the honey and everyone will eat who is left in the land shall have that day that wherever there could be a thousand vines with a thousand shekels of silver, it will be for briars and thorns with arrows and bows.

Those men will come there because all the land will become briars and thorns and to any hill which could be dug with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns. It will become a range for oxen and a place for sheep to roam. I'm going to boil it down for you.

Ahaz, I invited you to trust in me to deliver Jerusalem and you wouldn't. You trusted in the king of Assyria. You trusted in your own ways, in your own plans, in the arm of flesh.

Jerusalem's delivered for now. But one day I'm going to whistle and I'm going to bring forth the Assyrians and I'm going to bring forth the Egyptians and they're going to devour your land. You see those nice, pleasant agricultural fields you see out there.

They're going to be laid desolate and all that's going to grow. There's thorns instead of those nice row crops of corn and wheat and barley and all that stuff. Instead of all that that you see now, you know what? It's just going to be an overgrown mess and just animals are going to be wandering around there.

You wanted to trust in Assyria and they're going to come and defeat you and crush you. And Assyria would. Not totally overthrowing Judah.

That would come later with the Babylonians. But believe me, the Assyrians would come and put a whooping stick. And you know who put that whooping stick in their hand? King Ahaz, when he trusted in Assyria to deliver.

Friends, what a lesson for us. These invasions would bring Judah very low. It never had to be that way.

Isn't this the word of the Lord to us today? Where the Lord says to us here in verse four, take heed and be quiet. Do not fear or be faint hearted. And then later on, the invitation at the end of verse nine, if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.

The Lord wants us to walk by faith, not by sight, not by carnal reliance, but by faith. And to trust in him. Now, it's risky.

It really is. A lot of times it'll seem like the money thing to do is to trust in the Assyrians. Friends, if you trust in the Lord, it's risky.

But the Lord will bless it and establish you.

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