



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 6: 1-13

“The Prophet Cleansed, Called, Commissioned”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Let us look to the Lord. Father, we ask Thy blessing upon us as we again turn to the great prophecy of Isaiah, and we pray Lord that as we consider this wonderful book that we may be able by the Holy Spirit to place ourselves in the context of it. And as we read and study the words of the prophet, make the application to our day that the prophet would have made. We know Lord that Thy word is as eternal as is Thine own nature and therefore it has a permanent applicability to us. We thank Thee for this portion and we praise Thee for the wonderful things that are contained within it. Help us Lord to see them through the ministry of the Spirit. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Returning to Isaiah chapter 6 for our fourth lesson in Isaiah and the subject is the prophet cleansed, called, and commissioned. I think you have called, cleansed and commissioned and somehow or other I put those down in reverse order. It should be cleansed, called, and commissioned. And I put the simple outline that I am going to use tonight on the board so that you may understand where I am going and in the future I will try to do this for you.

Isaiah chapter 6, here we have one of the most remarkable of the revelations of the grace of God that is found in the Old Testament. Grace to the prophet and grace to

the nation. In fact, what we have in Isaiah chapter 6 is ultimately as we shall see a foreshadowing of the revelation of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. John remember in the first chapter of his gospel says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and true." And we are going to see tonight that Isaiah had the tremendous privilege of seeing our Lord Jesus Christ and what he saw of our Lord Jesus Christ was an anticipation of this manifestation of his grace.

Alexander McLaren in his exposition of Isaiah chapter 6 refers to one of sections of this chapter under the title of "The Making of a Prophet". G. Campbell Morgan refers to it as "The Vision and the Voice" and as you read through it you notice of course that Isaiah does have a vision and that he does hear a voice from God and this voice is a transforming voice. It gives us Isaiah's cleansing, Isaiah's call, and Isaiah's commission to the work of prophet.

It is a little strange as we look at this chapter to notice that it is not until the sixth chapter that he gives us this chapter which obviously describes how he was called of God to his particular ministry of prophet. And it is difficult to know exactly why he puts this particular chapter at this place in this prophecy. I would assume that the only explanation of this is that he must have come to a sense of his call after sometime in the ministry of the word of God and then he felt that it belonged morally in the revelation that he has here at this place. Well, if we cannot understand why he puts it in the sixth chapter it is very plain that he does speak of his call to the office of prophet.

So let us look now at verses 1 through 4 and will you listen as I read, and remember we have been saying that Isaiah was a man of about 25 years of age when Uzziah died. So he was a man about 25 years of age when he was called to preach as a prophet and in the sense in which it is set forth in this chapter. He begins by saying, in the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and his train filling the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim; each one had six wings.

With two, he covered his face and with two he covered his feet and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another and said: "Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory".

Most of the students of Isaiah by the way, may I insert this comment here, say that the prophet probably intends us to understand that the Seraphim spoke to one another antiphonally, that is, that one group of them say "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, and the other group answers with, "The whole earth is full of His glory." And the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him who cried and the house was filled with smoke.

Now this is a chapter in which we want to be sure to notice the date which is set forth for us in the first verse. I have often said to my students at seminary that the little words are the words that are often the most important in the Bible. Not the big words, but the little words. And here is a case where a date which appears at first to be very insignificant is extremely significant. It is in the year that King Uzziah died, but Isaiah saw this vision. The date not only tells us when but tells us why he had this vision.

Now to understand this, we are going to have to think again of the great King Uzziah and since this is a Bible study class and you have your Bibles, I am going to ask you to turn with me to the Book of 2 Chronicles chapter 26. 2 Chronicles chapter 26, now that is in the Old Testament and I will let you in a real big secret. It is right after first Chronicles. 2 Chronicles chapter 26 and I want you to read first with me verse 15, 2 Chronicles chapter 26 in verse 15. It is about 40% of the way through the Bible, 2 Chronicles chapter 26 in verse 15. Now some of you have your windows down and you are nervous. Feel free to get up and close your windows in your car and as you are going out close mine, too. Verse 15, Oh it has been done, thanks. We really have good helpers around here. The deacons are working. Verse 15, now have you found it? Chapter 26, verse 15: "And he made in Jerusalem engines invented by skillful men, siege artillery apparently to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks to shoot arrows and great stones, and his name spread far abroad for he was marvelously helped till he was strong."

Now Uzziah became a great king in Judah, one of the greatest. He ruled for 52 years. He strengthened the land. He was a good man. In fact, in many ways he was one of Israel's greatest kings. Perhaps Judah's greatest king aside of course from David, the great king David, but of the divided kingdom perhaps their greatest king. His name spread far abroad for he was marvelously helped till he was strong. And remember that Isaiah grew up as a young man, a noble, became a scribe in the royal kingdom, and Uzziah had been his king. He had never known any king but Uzziah.

Now notice, in verse 16, "Uzziah was a man who could take adversity better than prosperity," I said. Remember in the first lesson? And there are some Christians like that. They can take adversity much better than they can take prosperity. Adversity often calls us and causes us to trust in God. We are forced to do it but prosperity, when we are prosperous somehow or other there seems to come in the opinion almost unnoticed that we can get along without God.

Now we read verse 16, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God and then went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah, the priest, went in after him and with him four scores of priests of the Lord who were valiant men and they withstood Uzziah the king and said unto him, 'Did I pertaineth not unto thee Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense? Go out of the sanctuary for thou has trespassed. Neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God.'" Then Uzziah was angry. Uzziah of course, did not know what to do, but God knew what to do.

And we read, "He had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and while he was angry with the priests, suddenly as they looked at Uzziah, they saw the telltale mark of the whiteness that appeared in his forehead and began to spread all over his body and they looked and they said, 'Uzziah, you have leprosy.'" The text says the leprosy even goes up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord from beside the

incense altar. And Azariah, the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him and behold, he was leprous in his forehead and they thrust him out from there. Yea, he himself, hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death and dwelt in a separate house, a several house, a lazar house, a leper's house, being a leper for he was cut off from the house of the Lord, where the glory of God was seen by Isaiah. And Jotham, his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

Uzziah, then twelve years, one of the other books tells us, before his reign came to an end, sought to offer the incense and the temple of God, which only the priests could do, violated the Old Testament law, and by so doing, God judged him with leprosy. The great king, who dwelt in the palace, now dwells in a leper's house. And for twelve years, he dwelt in that house. A man who had been a great king, because of his sin, saw himself fall and ultimately become an outcast in the land which he had served so well in the other years. One of the things, by the way, that a leper had to do, was not only to dwell outside the camp in a special place, but he should, whenever he came in contact with others, he should put a sign over his lips and he should constantly cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" For that was what he was.

And that I think has significance, as Isaiah, when he sees the vision of the Lord says, "Woe is me because I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." What God intended to point out to Isaiah and others, by this judgment that fell upon him, was the fact that he had sinned and that of course the leprosy, an illustration of sin, was the sign that the hand of God was upon him in judgment.

Isaiah is also called Azariah. Azariah means "The Lord, His helper." Uzziah means, "The Lord his strength." And so now, the Lord his helper, the Lord his strength, has become a leper. Uzziah then is an illustration of a man who is great by the power of God, but who also falls and falls into terrible disgrace because of disobedience. Now in the year that king Uzziah died as an outcast, Isaiah also saw the Lord. And there cannot

help but be in the prophet's mind a connection between these events. The great king, which he had fought so much of for so many years, the great king is now gone. And I wonder if as Uzziah died, Isaiah did not repair to the temple in order to ask God what it was all about. And perhaps it was while he was in the temple and reflecting upon the tragedy that happened to Uzziah that he saw this vision of the Lord who is high and lifted up and his train filled the temple, for there is surely a contrast between the two.

Uzziah, the great king, that all had revered so, who seem to set forth so many years in glory and splendor upon the throne of Israel for forty years, a great king. But now, has sinned and has fallen. And as Isaiah thinks upon this, suddenly, through his spiritual vision, there comes the vision of the Lord of Hosts, who is high and lifted up and sitting upon a throne. "Isaiah, Judah's king may fall, but there is one king who never falls." Judah's king may die, Judah's king may sin, but there is one king who does not sin, who is incorruptible, who is the everlasting king, it is the Lord our God. That cannot help Isaiah, but be of significance in the fact that Isaiah at this time, saw the vision of the glory of the Lord.

By the way, I think it is perfectly proper too to say, that since Uzziah did not have the opportunity to enter the temple courts after his leprosy. It was his sin that prevented him from seeing perhaps himself, some indication of the glory of God. And let me say to you in case you are a Christian. It is very possible for us too, to lose the joy of the vision of God, because we are not willing to do his will. And if we turn away from the truth of God that we see in his word, we bring ourselves to the place where we too are liable to suffer in lack of vision of the glory of God. So the septum may fall on the earth, but it does not fall on him who sits above. We all have noticed buildings which have frosted glass. Frosted glass, I think is glass that is intended to let the light in, but to keep sight out. And sometimes, we construct our lives in that way you know? We want the light to come in, but at the same time, we do not want the full vision, the open vision, and

sometimes, God has to reach down and smash our little glass in order that He can get our attention, and also in order that we may see him.

And so, if Isaiah had been a man who revered Uzziah, and when he saw him go, and since Isaiah knew what was going on in that nation, he knew that Judah was in desperate straights. He knew that apostasy was rampant. He knew that failure existed on every hand. And if he went into that temple with, "O God, what shall we do now?" With Uzziah gone, God reached down and broke his little pane of glass and gave him a vision of the one who really counted. And Christians, you know sometimes, God has to reach down in our lives and break our little pane of glass in order to get our attention too. That is one of the saddest things about human nature that we have to wait until God does something like this. We should learn of course, but many of us do not learn.

Well we read then that he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple, and above it stood the seraphim. I wish I knew what seraphim were. I would like to have two or three around my house. At 9408 Dartcrest. We really do not know much about the seraphim; this is the only place that they appear in the Bible. The Hebrew word *sareph*, from which the seraphim is derived is a word that means "to burn." And so apparently, they are placed in the economy of angelology, for they were angelic beings apparently, there place has something to do with the presence of God. Our God is a consuming fire. The word of God states, "And the seraphim as they here stand above the throne of God are so close to God that something of the consuming fire of deity is expressed in their character. There is no ice near God. You will never find any one who is in close fellowship with God cold and icy. Usually, the closer we are to God, the more there burns of the fire and heat of the Divine Presence.

Now, sometimes, of course, you can have strange fire. And we have strange fire in some of our churches, in which we have speaking in tongues and rolling on the floor and many other things. I am not asking for that, but let me remind you of this, that when you are close to the Lord there is something of that fire that is there. There is something

about passion and there is something of the emotions and as I said I think the last time here, if we do not have emotions that have been touched by God, we do not really have all of the truth of the Bible either. So the seraphim come and you will notice too that in the presence of God they have six wings and they cover their face, they cover their feet as if to suggest that even angelic beings created by God to stand by God, even they sense that they cannot look upon the glory of God.

Theologians sometimes tell us that when we get to heaven we are going to have the beatific vision. That is, we are going to really see God. I do not believe it. I do not believe it. I do not believe we shall see God for I do not believe that any human being shall ever behold the essence of God. Oh, I think we shall see the God who is our Lord Jesus Christ and I do not think we shall feel any lack. In fact, I think that we when we come into the presence of our Lord we shall probably be like the apostles and like the prophets and like Job who immediately felt down in sin and like Isaiah here. But I believe that God is so holy that even his finest creatures cannot look upon him in his unveiled glory. God is spirit. They that worship him worship him in spirit and in truth and we shall know him and we shall worship him. We shall know what he is like though incomprehensible in the fullest sense but the angels I think is a lesson to us. And you know something? I think also that they tell us something else that ought to have some application to us down here on the earth and that is that the God whom we worship and the God whom we know through Jesus Christ is a Holy God. So holy that if we come into the presence of God with flippancy, we are surely out of his will and out of harmony with the Scriptures.

But let us look on. In verses 3 and 4 we read, "And one cried unto another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'" You know that really means? The word holy is a word that comes from a Hebrew word "kamash" which means to be separated or to be separate. In other words, the Holy One is the separated one. Sometimes contemporary theologians tell us something worthwhile. You notice I said sometimes. They do sometimes. But

there is not everything bad about them. Often you will find contemporary theologians speaking about God as the holy other one. Now they have derived this language from Karl Barth. He is popular, I would say, for God is the holy other one. He is not like men. Well, that is why I like to say not because Professor Barth said it but because I think it is true. The essential nature of God is holiness not love. Oh, he is love. He is light. He is a consuming fire, but his essential character is that he is different from men and that is what holy means. Holy, Holy, Holy. He is different. He is separated from men. He is not as you and I are.

Now of course, in the context, the reason that the seraphims shout, "Holy, holy, holy Isaiah" is because they want to draw the contrast between God the Lord here who is the great King of Judah and the king of Judah, Uzziah who has just died for he was not holy. He was the leper. Uzziah is the leper, but he is the leper; there is no corruption in the Lord of hosts.

So listen, Christians, in our love for the love of God, in our sense of his filial care and understating for us, let us not lose the sense of godly fear that we should have in the presence of God. Did you notice too that the text says "Holy, Holy, Holy"? And not Holy, Holy or Holy, Holy, Holy, Holy" In other words it says three times "Holy, Holy, Holy". I have a friend who is a great Bible teacher. I love him very much. He says that when Jesus Christ cried out "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me" that in that revelation we have the doctrine of the Trinity, for we have the second person of the trinity saying to the Father "My God" and then saying to the third person of the Trinity the Holy Spirit "My God" so that in that statement we have the trinity our Lord, the Father and the Spirit. "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?"

Now I do not think that anybody could possibly prove that. My friend thinks it so. I will not upset him. I will not disagree with him. I cannot prove he is wrong. He cannot prove he is right. So I just smile but when we come to this "Holy, holy, holy", I am much more inclined to think that what we have here is a foreshadowing of the trinity

for you see in the eighth verse, we read "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying "Whom shall I sin and who will go for us". I am not at all unsure. I am rather inclined to think that in this "Holy, Holy, Holy," we have not simply emphasis but perhaps a reference to the fact that the God here does subsist in three persons. Now then at this point we have the confession and the cleansing. Then said I, "Woe is me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. He is holy but he is with us." I think that the grace that is shown to the prophet Isaiah here is as remarkable as the glory that he has seen. For here as he is transported by vision into the presence of God in the great palace above and here is the angel saying "Holy, Holy, Holy," and then as he replies "Woe is me for I am undone" and then as this remarkable exhibition of grace in that he hath cleansed in the midst of his unholiness we have one of the most tremendous revelations of the grace of God that we could possibly have.

And I think there are some tremendous lessons here too. When we see God, we see ourselves. The sense of sin is the product of the vision of God. Easygoing evangelicalism, that is what we are. I am very much disappointed in evangelicalism today. Evangelicalism is very easygoing. It has no deep sense of sin, because it has no clear vision of God. Because it has no vision of God it has no sense of what it is to be a creature in the presence of the Holy Creator and we can never have it, until as Isaiah we enter into the presence of God and take a good look at Him.

I am very much disappointed in what is transpiring in evangelicalism today. I do feel that above all else what we need in our Christian circles is a deep searching of heart that brings us to the place where we defer spiritually into the presence of God and get down upon our faces and come to see Him, because when we do, we shall see ourselves. And when we see ourselves as Isaiah, we shall be cleansed. And when we are cleansed, we shall desire to serve. And when we serve God, through us, shall accomplish His purposes in the earth. So the prophet in the Presence of God, "Oh, woe is me, for I am

undone". If you will notice that he cries out almost the very things that a leper should. "Unclean, unclean!" Isaiah said for twelve years, and now the prophet as he sees himself. I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. You know you never notice one molehill as over against another. Or you never even notice one hill as over against another. One may be higher than the other, but when you look at them from the standpoint of one of the great mountains, they all look as nothing. Take one of our Texas mountains over to Tibet and put it out there and it will look like just a little hill. And so when a man comes into the Presence of God, he may think a great deal of himself until he does, but when he does, he sees himself as he really is.

You remember what Job said? Turn back a few pages to the 42nd chapter of Job, verses 5 and 6. "Job had a great experience and out of his great experience he came to see God. And Job was a man of whom God said that he was a man who was perfect. There was no man like him in the earth." And Job says in the last chapter of his book, the 42nd chapter in the 5th and 6th verses, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now, mine eyes seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes".

Do you remember that the Lord Jesus asked the Apostle Peter and others to launch out into the deep in the 5th chapter of the Gospel of Luke? And the disciples had fished all night and they had caught nothing. When Jesus asked them to launch out into the deep, he said, "Now let down your nets for a draft." And Peter said, "Master, we toiled all night and we have taken nothing; after all, we spent the whole night looking for fish and we haven't caught a thing. Here it is in a day time not a good time to fish. You have asked us to launch out into the deep, and anybody who knows anything about fishing knows that you do not catch fish in the deep in the middle of the day; you catch them in the shallow if you are going to catch them. And now you are saying let down your nets for a draft when we have already fished this late out. There is just no fish out today." But then he said, "Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the nets." And he did, and the text said he enclosed a great multitude of fish so that their nets began to

break. And suddenly Peter realized in whose presence he stood. And as he looked at the fish and as he looked at the Lord, finally he said, "Lord," as he fell upon his knees, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord". And always, in the presence of God, we see ourselves.

John, in the Book of Revelation, when he saw the risen Christ, fell at his feet as dead. By the way, when was the last time that you were in the Presence of God? When was the last time that you opened the Scriptures and said, Oh God, give me a vision of yourself. Some of the besetting sins of the religious are callousness in worship. You know, I think that, I said a minute ago that evangelicalism has a great need, they need to sense their sin through a sight of the Lord. I am very much disturbed, I say, because of the callousness that exists among us, it is amazing. It is amazing where the Bible is thought there should be individuals who are callous in spiritual things, but it is true. And then of course, there is contentment with mere form, have you noticed that? Unfortunately, it shows up too in the second generation and the third generation, but sometimes in the first. And then there is carelessness in life. All of these things are products of the failure to seek the face of God; I am disturbed. And for those of you, who are in Believers Chapel, the others of you do not have to listen now, I am disturbed about ourselves, because we can be callous; we can be content with mere form, we can be careless in life. But if it is really true that we have the word of God. And if it is really true that this God is this will God whom we worship and when we come together in his name, we should be characterized by Godly fear; a sense of the awe of divine presence when we meet in his name.

Well, Isaiah is a great lesson to us in this respect. By the way, may I also say something else too? And I want to be careful in what I say now because I do not want you to misunderstand. I have great respect for organizations that seek to bring the Gospel to any group, whether they are young or old. But there is a movement, fortunately, another movement in one of our organizations today that has done a great work of

testimony for God. There is a movement, Anana movement, in which there is a great stress upon the forgiveness that God has given us to the omission of any sense of the need for daily forgiveness. In fact, in this movement within this group, I have heard some of their speakers speak, and they have said that Christians should be so thrilled with the acceptance that they have before God that they should never be concerned about the forgiveness of daily sins. They have been totally accepted in Jesus Christ, totally accepted.

Now, of course we have been totally accepted in Jesus Christ, I do believe that. I do also believe, with all of my heart, that when Christians displease God, it is the time to get down upon our knees and make confession to God.

Now, we do not gain forgiveness by our confession as if it were a work. And it is surely not a fetish; we do not use 1 John 1:9 in that way "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins", because God never honors that type of thing. But when we have displeased him, immediately, we must get down upon our knees and confess that sin to God out of the heart, but we have the assurance of forgiveness. And Isaiah the Prophet, a man who had known God, is a man who realizes what he is, because of what he has seen, and as he looks at the Lord and looks at himself, he realizes that he is unclean and he needs forgiveness. And as he cries out in confession, there comes immediately cleansing.

By the way, did you notice that that cleansing which is described is related to the altar? Before I talk about that, I did not finish what I was going to say. That is a sign of old age. You know in truth, there are always two extremes: the right and the left, or the left and the right. This has no political connotation whatsoever. There is this side and there is that side. It is true we have total acceptance with God. It is also true that we are to maintain a moment-by-moment relationship to him in the family of God. If we so stress our total acceptance with God that we forget the other, then we leave ourselves open to license, if we so stress the necessity for this relationship moment by moment with

God that we forget our acceptance with him, we come to the place where we are morbid, where we are unstable because we are not sure that we really are accepted with God.

That is the value of theology, because we do not go to extremes, we know both sides of the truth. Isaiah knew both sides, he knew he was accepted but he knew, in the sight of God, he was unclean and he needed forgiveness. But notice now Isaiah, in the 6th verse: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; the abiding principle of sacrifice as the basis of cleansing.

Now you see, what Isaiah meant when he wrote this is simply this. It was at the altar that the sacrifice was burned. The sacrifice was slain and the body of the sacrificial animal was placed upon the fire and then the fires burned the sacrificial animal. Now all of that was designed to represent ultimately the work of Our Lord Jesus. For you see, he is the Lamb of God and he was slain at Calvary and there as He hung up on the cross, the fires of divine judgment burned in him. As he said, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" The fire was burning. God was meteing out upon Him the judgment due us. That is the fire of divine judgment. It searched Our Lord and the infinite perfections of his character and being to the fullest. And now by virtue of what happened at Calvary, those who put their trust in Christ have once and for all forgiveness, total acceptance with him forevermore and then, as sin is known to us practically as we confessed that sin, the benefits of the saving work done thousands of years ago are applied to us by the Holy Spirit. And so, it is always by reason of the sacrifice that acceptance and daily cleansing come. Everything that we have from God is related to the cross. Without shedding of blood, there is no remission. No forgiveness. That is the one foundation of a right relationship with God.

And so it is affirmed from off the altar of divine judgment that purges the sin from Isaiah's lips. And we read in the 7th verse: "And he laideth upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched Thy lips; and Thine iniquity is taken away, and Thy sin purged."

And so Isaiah receives cleansing. At this point, we read also: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Someone by the way, has outlined Isaiah chapter 6 by using three words. Woe, Lo, Go. Did you notice verse 5: "Woe is me!" That is Isaiah's sin. Verse 7: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." Isaiah's cleansing. "Go!" Isaiah's commission.

Now, I want you to notice that as Isaiah is cleansed he immediately hears the voice of the Lord. One of the reasons we do not hear the voice of the Lord is because we have not bothered to be cleansed. We have not cared for many others. We have put our trust in Jesus Christ, and we know that our future is secure because of the cross and we like it that way and we do not really want to be disturbed anymore. We want to be sure that we are going to heaven and that is about as far as we want to go. And furthermore, we even have some who say that it is hopeless to get beyond that. It is hopeless to think about the growing in grace. We do not want to become like the Pharisees and proud of our growth. Of course not! But our salvation is our means to grow. We do not want to stay children all our lives, do we? It is good to know the truth of the cross that is where life begins, but that is the beginning of life. It is not the end.

And so Isaiah here as he is cleansed, he hears the voice of the Lord and now God is going to call him to something that is greater. We have, of course, a far higher motive for service than the seraphs, who served God because we serve God because he has loosed our bonds in Isaiah 2: And he hears the words, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" God does not desire to enlist his men in his service against their will. Did you know that? He does not want any men who have been forced. He does not want any draftees. All God's servants are volunteers. He never impresses anyone into service. It is always, who will go for us. Whom shall we send? And in Isaiah's case he answers. Two qualifications: One must be sent, one must be willing. You know how we answer that? Here am I, send Joe.

I do not think that a prophet ever had a stranger message than the one that Isaiah is to preach. Don't you know he was startled? No, I do not think he was completely startled. Do you know why? I think Isaiah had had enough contact with Israel to realize that he had a tough job.

I wonder if in the 20th Century, those who preach and teach the word of God do not have a similar job. Listen: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? Here am I, send me!" And he said, "Go and tell these people, Here ye indeed but understand not, and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of those people fat. Make their innards heavy. Shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart and be converted and be healed."

"Some men are called to preach that men might believe and be saved. Other men are called to preach that men might hear and not believe and not be saved", said Isaiah, who was of the latter type.

That is right. That is what it says. Look at it. Do not look at me and say Dr. Johnson, how can you say such a thing like that? That is what the text says. And let me tell you this, and it ought to send cold shivers through your spiritual soul or up and down your spiritual spine. In the New Testament, this text is quoted by our Lord in connection with Israel. It is quoted by Paul in connection with Israel more than once. It is quoted by John in connection with Israel. In other words, it is possible for a people to listen to the word of God and listen to the word of God and listen to the word of God, and have God preaching to them through his servants to bring them to faith and salvation and to so turn against that until finally God says: "It is now necessary that retribution and judgment come to them."

We can never understand why this had come at this particular time in Israel's day and we can never, of course, analyze the character of a nation or a people or a church. We are not omniscient but we can know that it exists.

And I have wondered as I have watched in my little Christian experience and I have watched men preached in hard places and hear the word of God preached faithfully by men who had spiritual gift and there is no response and no response and a turning away, and finally it seems almost as if the Hand of God falls upon the congregation and it scatters or becomes one in which the gospel is no longer preached at all, if we do not have just such a thing as this.

Now will you turn with me quickly to the New Testament to Matthew chapter 13: "The Lord Jesus after ministering to Israel came to the conviction by the Spirit that Israel, as a nation, was not going to respond to Him. And he began to speak to the disciples in parables. And in the 10th verse of the 13th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, after he is given a parable, the disciples came and said unto him, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" He answered and said unto them, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which sayeth, by hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive."

In other words, our Lord has a ministry like that, too. It was a ministry in which the word of God came to a people who have rejected the word of God, and so, as a result, there came the retributive judgment of God upon Israel. They rejected our Lord, Jesus Christ. They were responsible with the Romans for the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ and finally because of their disobedience and their judgment, they were scattered to the four corners of the earth. What a terrible commission but nevertheless, a biblical one.

Now finally, in the chapter, just about time to close, then said I, "Lord, how long?" You see, Isaiah was a man who knew that Israel could never be cast off completely. How

long Lord? And then notice the answer. And in this answer, you will notice that what he states essentially is, that judgment is going to pass through Israel but a remnant will abide. And he answered until the city has been wasted without inhabitant and there are houses without men and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. If I may just for one moment tell you what I think that is without going into a long explanation.

He refers to the time...Let's just say we look at Isaiah's day, this is Isaiah's day, and this is 70 AD in the destruction of Jerusalem, this is the day of Pentecost, coming of the Spirit, age of the church, and finally, this is the time of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus before the kingdom. This is the age of the church in which we are living. Now what Isaiah is told is that until the city's be wasted without inhabitant, the houses without land, the land be utterly desolate, until there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land Isaiah, you are going to prophesy and this message is to be true of Israel until that time and that great forsaking, I think, of course Isaiah will be in the presence of the Lord by then. But that great forsaking will come ultimately in 70 AD when Israel shall finally, after having rejected our Lord, be scattered to the four corners of the earth. So the message will last that long.

And then he says in the 13th verse, but yet in it shall be a tenth and it shall return. In other words, Israel is going to be scattered to the four corners of the earth and great judgment is to come upon Israel. And we saw a little bit of it in our lifetime, in Nazi Germany. Millions lost their lives. And down through the years, Israel has been persecuted, and persecuted, and persecuted, and slaughtered. When Isaiah says a tenth, he says a tenth and it shall return and shall be consumed. In other words, back into the land. A tenth, but when they come into the land, they, too, shall face great judgment and shall be eaten as a teal or a terebinth tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, or as the Hebrew texts says, "Whose stock remaineth when they are felled." What he means is that a tenth shall come back, it shall be consumed, but

just like a tree, which has its limbs taken off but the life of which still remains in the trunk of that tree, so the Holy Seed shall be the substance or stock of it.

Now to explain what he means, is simply this: There is going to be a great judgment until 70 AD and a great forsaking. Israel is going to be scattered to the four corners of the earth. A tenth shall return. They shall return to a time of judgment: the great tribulation period. But though there shall be a great judgment upon the tenth that return, still, like a tree, which has lost its branches, but still has its root within it, so Israel has a stock within it and out of that, out of that remnant, there shall come the people that shall have the fulfillment of the promises of God. And so, here is the second of Isaiah's great messianic prophecies. He has said in the Fourth chapter that Messiah is the branch. And here, he says Messiah is the trunk, and out of this, shall come blessings.

Now our time is up but I wanted to say just one thing more. I want you to turn to the New Testament in John chapter 12, for here we have one of those amazing things that we do not want to miss. John, in his gospel, has given us, as you know, seven great signs. These signs are designed to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus. When he finishes his revelation of the signs, he states what the other gospel writers state, and that is, that Israel did not believe. And now in verse 37 of the 12th chapter, he gives us his words. He says, "But though He, Jesus had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore, they could not believe because that Isaiah said again, 'He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart and be converted and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.'"

Now who is referred to by the "his?" Well, though he had done so many signs before them, who had done the signs? It was our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Isaiah saw his glory. Whose glory? Jesus Christ's glory. You see, for the Apostle John, when Isaiah

in the temple looked and saw the glory of the God who sat upon the throne about whom the seraphim were he was seeing as John said our Lord Jesus Christ. We call this a theophany, an appearance of God. Why did the Old Testament have theophanies? Theophanies were given to prepare Israel for the coming of the Son of God. Theophanies were designed to stir up their minds so that when the Son of God finally came among them, they should not be stumbled at the idea of God above men. And so when Isaiah looked up, he saw the true King of Israel, he saw The King, our Lord Jesus. And he heard his message. And his message was the message that the King himself would one day give. But in it, there was a prophecy of the fact that out of the seed of The King, Israel's promises should ultimately be there.

Let us not forget as our practical lesson, it is the yielded life that is the wielded light. And Isaiah, because he was yielded, became useful to God. And out of his experience of seeking God, he had his vision of God. May God help us to do the same. Let us close in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word, for these great chapters in the Old Testament.