

August 2

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 6 & 7

Key Verse: "... Whom shall I send?"... "Here am I! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

Overview

After condemning Judah's sins and declaring the divine judgment to come, Isaiah tells us in chapter six of how he came to proclaim his message. Isaiah's calling into the prophetic ministry likely occurred several years prior to this writing; it was in the year that good King Uzziah died (about 740 B.C., also called Azariah), but because Uzziah had been stricken with leprosy, he spent the last ten years of his life in seclusion. His ungodly son Jotham ruled (cf. 2 Chron. 26:16-21; 2 Kings 15:1-7), and his wicked grandson Ahaz may have exerted some influence. When Isaiah went into the Temple to pray, he must have been discouraged by the spiritual state of the nation (6:5).

The Lord, however, lifted Isaiah's spirits by giving him a vision of Himself in all His glory and holiness. It was truly a life-changing experience. Isaiah saw the Lord upon His throne, thus reconfirming that God was still in control. We know that no man has seen God (John 1:18), so what Isaiah saw was a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of Christ, to which the Apostle John attests (cf. John 12:41). In the light of God's holiness, Isaiah, likely one of the most righteous men of his day, was immediately struck with his own sinfulness and defilement (64:6). When he confessed this before his Holy God, the Lord provided his cleansing from sin, that he might be equipped for God's service. The coal from the altar symbolized the shedding of blood upon the altar of sacrifice, and thus Isaiah was graciously purified and granted remission from sin (6:5-7; Lev. 6:13; Heb. 9:13-14, 22).

When the Lord asked, "Whom shall I send...?", Isaiah was now a ready, willing, and grateful servant, full of the fear of the Lord, who, without hesitation, responded, "Here am I! Send me." Would that all God's servants be as willing to answer His call and proclaim His message! Isaiah was commissioned by God to preach, even though his message would be heard by those who would not heed it; they would be like those with hardened hearts, deaf ears, and blinded eyes (6:8-10). Yet his message would not be in vain (55:11), for the Lord told him that there would be a remnant of the faithful (a tenth) who would return from the captivity, and even though they too would be cut down, from them there would arise another smaller remnant (holy seed), a shoot of new life that will remain (6:11-13). God's plan of redemption would not be foiled, for from this new remnant, the Lord would bring forth Immanuel (meaning "God with us"), the Messiah Jesus.

In chapter seven, we read of the marvelous prophecy of Immanuel's miraculous conception by a young virgin (7:14). The historical event that gave rise to this prophecy was when Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel (represented by Ephraim) came against King Ahaz, in order to force Judah to join their coalition against the rising power of the Assyrians. However, the frightened Ahaz decided to turn to the king of Assyria for help rather than turning to God. Ahaz' sinfulness led Judah into a state of confusion, causing both political and religious decay. God was gracious, however, and sent Isaiah to encourage and warn Ahaz to trust in God, for the coalition's siege on Jerusalem would not be successful. For confirmation Isaiah asked Ahaz to ask a sign from God,

but Ahaz pretended to be too pious to do such a thing, when in actuality he was filled with unbelief. Thus Isaiah's prophecy about Jerusalem's fall and the desolation of the land was indeed fulfilled at the hands of the very same king of Assyria whom Ahaz had trusted (7:9, 17-25; 2 Chron. 28:20).

Even though Ahaz wearied God, God gave him a sign anyway, since he was from the house of David and because the sign would bring hope to others. Immanuel was to be born of a virgin. The prophet Isaiah foresaw an event that would take place about 700 years in the future. However, he did not know such a long period would elapse until this miraculous event; therefore, he spoke of it as happening in his own context. In the New Testament, it is clear that this prophecy was understood to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:22-23).

Prayer

Dear Lord, please give us a new vision of Yourself. We recognize our sinfulness and Your holiness. Touch us, purify us, and we respond by saying, "Here we are; send us." In the Name of the virgin-born One we pray. Amen.