

Isaiah 5-6

Good evening and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your bibles to Isaiah 5?

SHOW PIC Ever laid down under a tall oak tree, and gazed up? You see branches and limbs overlapping. It's tough to tell which limbs are on top and which are on the bottom. **CLOSE PIC**

Distance between the limbs is almost impossible to judge, it looks like a maze. And this is how it is sometimes with prophecy, and with Isaiah in particular. Some of what Isaiah saw was local and current. It occurred during the rise of the Assyrian Empire.

Yet other aspects of Isaiah's prophecy's wouldn't be fulfilled for several hundred years when God sent the Babylonians to judge the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah. Other prophecies wouldn't be fulfilled until the birth of Jesus, and still others not yet fulfilled until Christ comes back!

These overlapping applications can make the book of Isaiah tough for us to interpret at times. In fact, I'm sure Isaiah himself didn't fully understand all that he saw.

Remember, Isaiah chapters 2-5 are a single prophecy. 2:2 states it's for "the latter days..." But it also spoke to the current situation.

This is what we see not only in Isaiah but through many of the OT prophets. It's looking both locally and globally. It speaks to both current and future dilemmas.

We're gonna study chapters 5-6, and the title of tonight's message is A Remnant Remains

Let's pray

Chapter 5 opens with God's viewpoint of Israel
1-2

1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:

My Well-beloved has a vineyard
On a very fruitful hill.

2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.

He built a tower in its midst,

And also made a winepress in it;

So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,

But it brought forth wild grapes. In the OT the grapevine was a symbol for the nation. **SHOW PIC** The Temple doors were carved with golden vines. A vine is a symbol of joy! **CLOSE PIC**

And this is what Israel was supposed to bring to God - great joy!
This is why God plowed, and planted, and weeded, and spent so much effort and time cultivating His people.

But instead of producing "good grapes," Israel yielded "wild grapes."

3-4

3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

4 What more could have been done to My vineyard
That I have not done in it?

Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,
Did it bring forth wild grapes? The vineyard’s failure was not
God’s fault. The people sinned and rebelled against God.

5-7

5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard:
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;
And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will lay it waste;
It shall not be pruned or dug,
But there shall come up briars and thorns.
I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain on it.”

7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.

Because of Judah’s sin, God removed His protection. The
vineyard became vulnerable to break-ins, takeovers, weeds and
drought.

There is a limit to God’s patience. And this is true for both Israel of
old - and Christians today. Read John 15 -Jesus is the Vine, and
we are the branches. **John 15:2 “Every branch in Me that does
not bear fruit He takes away;[fn] and every branch that bears fruit
He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

Resist God to a point, and He'll remove His hedge. The challenge is that none of us know where that line is when God removes His hand of protection.

The rest of Isaiah 5 consists of six woes pronounced on Judah

8 Woe to those who join house to house;

They add field to field,

Till there is no place

Where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land! First, God condemns Jerusalem's overcrowding. In Isaiah's day, real estate developers were cramming too many houses side-by side. It increased profits, but at the cost of healthy living conditions.

9-10

9 In my hearing the LORD of hosts said,

"Truly, many houses shall be desolate,

Great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant.

10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath,

And a homer of seed shall yield one ephah." Once fertile land will become barren! A ten acre vineyard will produce a scant nine gallons of grapes.

SHOW PIC This is what uncontrolled development does. It strips the land of its nutrients. I hope you notice from this verse, God cares about the environment. **CLOSE PIC** God's concerned with what we do to His creation. When mankind harms the environment it eventually brings harm to himself.

11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
That they may follow intoxicating drink;
Who continue until night, till wine inflames them! Here's another
woe... to the party crowd! Start drinking first thing in the morning
and there's a problem.

12 The harp and the strings,
The tambourine and flute,
And wine are in their feasts;
But they do not regard the work of the LORD,
Nor consider the operation of His hands. All our celebrations
should focus on remembering God and giving Him honor. But
tragically our world forgets the King in their celebrations
13-14

13 Therefore my people have gone into captivity,
Because they have no knowledge;
Their honorable men are famished,
And their multitude dried up with thirst.
14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself
And opened its mouth beyond measure;
Their glory and their multitude and their pomp,
And he who is jubilant, shall descend into it. Notice one more
point in verse 14, "Sheol" or "Hell" is enlarged. It seems Hell
grows to fit the demand. And to me, this speaks volumes about
God's love.

In Matthew 25 Jesus said hell wasn't made for man, but for the
devil and his demons. Folks go to Hell because they choose to,

by rejecting Jesus - but it was never God's intention. Hell has to be enlarged to meet the demand.

15-16

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

17 Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture,
And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat. When Jesus reigns there'll be enough leftovers for even strangers to feast.

Here's the 3rd woe-Judah was prideful. They thought they could sin and not be caught.

18-19

18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
And sin as if with a cart rope;
19 That say, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work,
That we may see it;
And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come,
That we may know it." In other words, "If God is going to judge us, let's see Him do it now!" They reveled in sin and mocked God.

Here's the 4th woe- its for our modern times!

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! And this is what's
happened today-we've rewritten the moral code for our society

Real truth never changes. Despite man's reinterpretations, God's
Word is forever immutable.

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight! God sees dangers we don't see.
He's smarter than we are, and we'll avoid great pain by obeying
Him.

22-23

22 Woe to men mighty at drinking wine,
Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink,
23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe,
And take away justice from the righteous man! The Bible might
not prohibit the use of alcohol, but it certainly warns us of its
dangers.

24-25

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

25 Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people;
He has stretched out His hand against them
And stricken them,
And the hills trembled.
Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets.

For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand is stretched out still. Twice in history this prophecy was fulfilled. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and in 70 AD by the Romans. The carcasses of Israelis littered Jerusalem's streets.

26-30 should've sent shivers upon the readers, as God describes what He's going to do as He brings forth His judgement

26 He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar,
And will whistle to them from the end of the earth;
Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.
27 No one will be weary or stumble among them,
No one will slumber or sleep;
Nor will the belt on their loins be loosed,
Nor the strap of their sandals be broken;
28 Whose arrows are sharp,
And all their bows bent;
Their horses' hooves will seem like flint,
And their wheels like a whirlwind.
29 Their roaring will be like a lion,
They will roar like young lions;
Yes, they will roar

And lay hold of the prey;
They will carry it away safely,
And no one will deliver.
30 In that day they will roar against them
Like the roaring of the sea.
And if one looks to the land,
Behold, darkness and sorrow;
And the light is darkened by the clouds.

God will rally the nations together against Jerusalem. It'll be an ominous site. Israel's only defense will be to turn to God. How ironic, the Almighty God Who was ignored will be known as Israel's only hope and salvation.

Chapter 6

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. The vision Isaiah saw was so monumental he never forgot the date, 740 BC. The king had died. Uzziah was a good and godly king. He reigned over Judah for 52 years. Tradition suggests Isaiah was his younger cousin. He'd never known life without Uzziah. But now Uzziah is gone!

Isaiah lived his whole life in the shadow of this godly king, but now he's on his own! And we all experience this at some point. If you haven't, you will. It occurs when you leave home, or when you're separated from a friend, or when a spiritual mentor moves on, or even passes away,

When God is all you have you learn that God is enough.

And that's when Isaiah saw God's sovereignty - He's sitting on a throne. He saw God's splendor - He's high and lifted up. He saw God's superiority - His train filled the temple.

Isaiah realizes that God's sovereignty, and His splendor, and His superiority are unsurpassed.

2 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 word "Seraphim" means "burning ones." And apparently, the seraphim have wings - six wings. Isaiah says, "with two he covered his face" - God's glory was too much for him to handle...

"With two he covered his feet" - the angel was too humble to stand in God's presence...

"And with two he flew" - He stayed suspended in the presence of God. It represented constant worship and tireless service.

3 And one cried to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" The word "holy" means "set apart." It speaks of God's uniqueness. We say God is love, but when we say God is holy we're saying He loves like no one else loves.

We say God is faithful, but when we say He's holy we're saying God's faithful like no one else is faithful. No one else compares.

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

4-5

4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 So I said:

"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 my eyes have seen the King,

The LORD of hosts." You'd think Isaiah would say "Wow" -

instead his reaction is "Woe." Up against God's holy glory all he can focus on is his own sin. He cries out, "For I am undone!"

Notice, Isaiah recognizes the depth of his problem. He's not just guilty of an occasional slip of the lip, he's "a man of unclean lips." It's his nature to sin. The problem is not just what Isaiah says, but what he is.

And this is our problem. The issue isn't just what comes out of our mouth, but what's in our heart. As Christians we're tempted to compare ourselves to other people and get haughty, and smug and self-righteous.

But when we see God, we realize we can't measure up. It's ironic, the more time I spend with God, the more unworthy of Him I know I am.

What happens next to Isaiah is so encouraging!
6-7

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

“Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged.” This is an example of amazing grace. The posts are shaking, the angels are singing, the house of God is smoking. But when Isaiah confesses his sin, God sends an angel with a coal from the altar to burn out Isaiah's impurity.

We all want to be touched by God. Warmed, comforted, inspired, and strengthened - but notice God's touch first purges and purifies Isaiah.

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

Notice seraphim-the burning ones- have to use tongs to grab the coal-signifying the purity of God's altar

8 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.” Once Isaiah is cleansed, he’s in a place where he can hear God speak. He writes, “Also I heard the voice of the Lord...”

So often I’m asked, “How can I hear God speak?” The answer is simple, “You can’t miss God’s voice when your heart is right toward Him.” It’s sin that creates static on the line.

Isaiah is purged and now he hears God clearly. Christians think they need to strain and extend great effort to hear God. I think it’s easier than that. Get your heart right - get specific with your sin, and ask Him to purge you precisely - and His voice will come in loud and clear.

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

Isaiah tells us, “Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah volunteers without the slightest hesitation! When God called Moses he complained he was slow of speech. Jeremiah said he was too young. Gideon was reluctant and needed affirmation.

God had to repeat his call to Samuel three times before he replied. But Isaiah overhears God talking to Himself, “Whom shall

I send?" God doesn't even speak to him directly, yet Isaiah jumps up and shouts to the Lord, "Here am I! Send me."

This is another byproduct of spending time with God-it makes us want to serve Him. Not out of duty, but out of love.

9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people:

'Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' God desires for us to be His hands and feet in a needy world. He wants us to be His mouthpiece and trumpet His truth. But before we go, there's first a woe! A "woe is me."

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

We've been given good news to share, but Isaiah had a tough message. His audience will neither understand nor appreciate his prophecies. God gives him an unpleasant task. His ministry will...

10 "Make the heart of this people dull,
And their ears heavy,
And shut their eyes;
Lest they see with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And return and be healed." Rather than open the eyes of His people, God is going to use Isaiah to harden His people's hearts.

Isaiah's ministry was not intended to deliver Judah and Jerusalem, but to prepare them for judgment. Whatever the Lord has asked us to do, I'm sure grateful it's not the same as Isaiah!

11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" pause here. Isaiah isn't looking forward to the ministry God gave him. He wonders how long he'll have to preach to stubborn people...

...11 And He answered:

"Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant,
The houses are without a man,
The land is utterly desolate, Isaiah needs to preach until judgment comes - until houses are empty, and cities are without their citizens. Yet the land will never be totally desolate. There will always be a remnant
12-13

12 The LORD has removed men far away,
And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

13 But yet a tenth will be in it,
And will return and be for consuming,
As a terebinth tree or as an oak,
Whose stump remains when it is cut down.
So the holy seed shall be its stump." One-tenth of Jews will survive and they'll need God's truth to rebuild. Isaiah will never be without a job.

Judah was a majestic tree that was chopped down. Only a stump remained. But that stump started to grow again. A remnant of Jews came back from Babylon in 535 BC, and from that stump a Messianic Branch eventually grew - Jesus was born.

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