

Immanuel: God... With Us

(preached 12/19/21)

Please turn to *Isaiah 6*.

BACKDROP. The 12 tribes of Israel have split into two groups that formed their own countries: Israel to the north, and Judah to the south with Jerusalem—the main point of contention, on their border. As of the time of Isaiah, the two countries are at war with each other and both have fallen away from God and His covenant.

FIRST 5 CHAPTERS. The Lord has spent the majority of the first 5 chapters laying out the sins of both nations and His angry response, both within His heart and His forthcoming actions against them.

HOPE: THE KINGDOM. At the same time, however, He continues to promise a future Kingdom where all will be forgiven and the people made righteous. He hints at a time of reunification not just between Israel and Judah, but between all the people with God Himself. He reveals that said reunification, once it finally happens, will be forever which will end the perpetual cycle of sin, punishment, forgiveness, restoration, complacency, falling away, and then back to sin again. Indeed, this Kingdom will be a forever Kingdom.

The question is WHY and HOW?

- Why will the people be forgiven?
- What is the agent of their forgiveness?
- How will the reunification happen and why will the reunification be forever?
- What factors will be in place to ensure the people don't fall into sin again?

FAR-FETCHED. I can only imagine this may have seemed like a far-fetched idea at the time to someone like Isaiah. The people divided to the point of civil war, the majority fallen away from God and His covenant, following the desires of their flesh rather than the Lord. Whilst fighting with each other, foreign powers were scheming to take advantage of their division and invade.

Doesn't this sound quite a bit like modern day America?

“BUT GOD.” As we go through chapters 6-7, let's remember an important statement especially when all hope seems to be lost: “but God.”

Isaiah 6:1-7 (ESV)

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with

two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

³ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

CAUGHT UP TO HEAVEN. After hearing from God about the sins of the people, how the Lord feels about it, and the smackdown He’s going to deliver, Isaiah is caught up to Heaven and brought to the very throne room of God!

GOD’S ROBE FILLED. I find it fascinating that, in verse 1, the train of Father’s robe FILLED the Temple. Who is the NC Temple of God? We are! God’s robe, which is our covering, FILLS US! His righteousness! His love! His holiness!

WORSHIP IS SWEET INCENSE. The angels worship God and the “smoke” filling the temple is sweet incense. Please remember: worship is sweet incense to God! He “smells” it and finds it pleasing.

WORSHIP OR COMPLAINING? Are our temples full of worship or rather complaining, bad thoughts, and a negative outlook? ***We’re filling our temples with something all the time***...there are no empty temples. Miserable people fill theirs with the wrong kind of spiritual smoke—the kind that kills breathing and brings spiritual “lung” disease.

FILL IT WITH THANKS & PRAISE? How about we fill it with the giving of thanks, praise, and exalting the Lord for Who He is, what’s He’s done, and what He’s going to do? Perhaps we might start believing, thinking, and feeling differently so as to experience more peace and joy?

Verse 5: Isaiah realizes he’s a sinful man in the presence of a completely holy God who hates sin, so his “woe is me!” is well-founded. He specifically refers to the words that he’s spoken and verses 6-7 show a Seraph touching his lips with a “coal from the fire” to cleanse his sin. The “coal” is from the same incense I’ve been referring to: that of worship.

PERHAPS THE MORE WE WORSHIP, THE LESS “WOE IS ME!” WILL BE COMING OUT OF OUR MOUTHS.

Isaiah 6:8-13 (ESV)

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

⁹ And he said, “Go, and say to this people: ““Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said: “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste,

¹² and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.” The holy seed is its stump.

GOD’S COMMISSION/PATTERN. The commission God is giving isn’t a pleasant one and we need to navigate through this carefully. Reading the Bible from beginning to end shows a particular **pattern** that repeats itself over and over. Here it goes:

- God’s people begin to fall away from the faith, pursuing fleshly desires which are meant by other gods (Satan & his angels).
- They become less willing to hear the truth when it’s spoken, and become hostile to repentance.
- The less willing they become, the less ABLE they become to hear or see the truth.
- Eventually God allows this process, even seeming to “help” it in some, to the point where they’re given over to a reprobate mind and a complete falling away.
- It’s at this point people become so hostile to the truth that their response to it is murderous in nature. Their conscience seared to the point of non-existence.

REPROBATE MIND. This is the commission Isaiah is given in verses 8-10...ouch. To allow this terrible process to go forward. That’s why he asks in verse 11: “how long oh Lord?” God’s response isn’t encouraging: He says a smackdown is coming first.

Is that it, then? Have the people’s sins gone so far that God is done? Has His patience run out? Is He going to rain down His fiery wrath until the next time everyone messes up again? Let’s go to chapter 7 to see if there’s any hope, a solution, or a remedy.

Isaiah 7:1-9 (ESV)

¹ In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it.

² When the house of David was told, “Syria is in league with Ephraim,” the heart of Ahaz and

the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

³ And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.

⁴ And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.

⁵ Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying,

⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"

⁷ thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.

⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.

⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all."

Things get worse! Now that the old king has died and his son sits on the throne of Judah, Israel makes a pact with a foreign power to invade Judah! Heading up this effort is the tribe of Ephraim so I remind you: this is civil war.

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR. Imagine if, in our own Civil War, either the north or south had formed an alliance with the British or the French and imagine if either country sent their army to help invade. Imagine if that happened now: if our country split, were at war with each other, and one side enlisted Russia or China to send troops over to attack the other side. That's what was happening in chapter 7 in ancient Israel and Judah! The whole thing was a major disaster.

DOWNFALL OF SYRIA/EPHRAIM. God prophesies that the alliance between Syria and Ephraim won't win...good news! Now let's reread the last line in verse 9 that God says to Isaiah: "If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all."

Faith is not belief—we mix up the two all the time. They are not the same!

BELIEF if when you and I CHOOSE to believe a promise or declaration God has made. Remember the sermon series I did on the Bible as the Sword of the Spirit? I talked about how the sword divides out what we truly believe vs. what God's Word says, and that we now stand at a crossroads where a choice needs to be made. We either believe what God's Word says and repent of our former beliefs, or we don't.

FAITH is the gift God gives and the fruit produced by His Spirit within us when we believe His Word! Faith is completely supernatural and withstands external circumstances, internal feelings, and the devil himself!

PROMISE OF VICTORY. In the case of Isaiah 7, God has prophesied victory for Judah even though external circumstances are bleak and everyone is full of fear and worry. Let's read to see what happens next:

Isaiah 7:10-16 (ESV)

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,

¹¹ "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."

¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

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.

¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

TIME MEANS NOTHING. And here's another of many examples of how God operates that confuses us modern day western thinking Christians: **TIME MEANS NOTHING TO GOD.**

We want everything in chronological order. B follows A, and C follows B, eventually getting to Z...that makes sense to us. Yet God doesn't work like that and neither did Jesus, even when He came in human form, because He is also God! Being outside of time, the Lord appears (to us) to jump forward and backwards as He wills!

TAKES THE SPIRIT. Let's be reminded of what Paul revealed to the Corinthians: it truly takes the Spirit of God for us to understand the deep things of God! To "get" what the Bible is saying.

Verses 14-16 speak of time centuries in Isaiah's future, to the birth of our Savior and Lord Jesus! It seems to have nothing to do the crises currently going on in this chapter. Yet it does.

FUTURE BRINGS HOPE NOW. We like to talk about the Rapture, don't we? And about the return of Christ? While these glorious events might take place next year or 100 years from now, they're in our future and they give us hope for the now if we're spiritually minded. Paul told us to comfort one another with the teaching of the Rapture and that was 2000 years ago.

HEBREWS 11. As people of faith, we're supposed to look to the future promises of God and find hope—a reading of Hebrews 11 shows all the OT saints did exactly that and goes onto say that a hopeful future gives them present day strength.

CARNAL MIND. Kim preached about crucifying the carnal mind last week, and the carnal mind focuses on fear and worry: both for the present and the future. It looks at negative events going on in the world, our country, our town, and our homes and therefore loses hope. The

carnal mind does not and cannot focus on the promises of God, especially those of the future. It wants God to produce solutions to the problems we're having right now.

Yet FAITH allows us to draw on our retirement now.

RETIREMENT BEGINS. When I pass or when the Rapture happens, whichever comes first, that's why my eternal retirement begins. God has stored up MASSIVE everlasting security for me in the divine IRA and 401K that I have in Heaven.

DRAW NOW? Isn't it great when we have money saved up in an earthly retirement plan that we can draw on now? Without any penalties? What if we had a billion dollars saved up in an IRA or 401K, would we ever "worry" about draining it if we started drawing on it now?

God allows and blatantly encourages us to do the same! A reading of Hebrews 11 clearly shows the OT saints believing not just in, but FOR things they would never see in their lifetimes including the coming of Jesus Immanuel. Jesus said He knew Abraham personally...how is this? When did Abe see Jesus? Hebrews 11 reveals that Abe saw both Jesus and the New Jerusalem yet never in his physical lifetime...but rather through the prophetic promises of God!

All the saints in both OT and NT drew present day hope, motivation, faith, and power from the future promises of God.

ISAIAH POINTED TO IMMANUEL JESUS. So in the midst of civil war, faithlessness, lawlessness, and invasion God points Isaiah and the people to the coming Jesus to encourage them...to inspire them to believe so that He will give them faith.

ASSYRIA. In chapter 8 God shows Israel there's a far greater calamity on the way, even worse than the one they're in now! Just as they are fighting with each other, the Assyrian Empire which is the most powerful in the world, is on their way to wipe them all out!

CHINA. Imagine that during all the squabbling going on in the US right now, China was preparing for an invasion....

COMING INVASION. Assyria has an army that's so massive it could easily wipe out all of Israel and Judah alike—they stood no chance whatsoever. Scripture goes on to say that it's being led by a Satanic spirit of death, demoralization, and suicide and that the king of Assyria is completely without mercy. In other words, the problem is about to go from big to exponentially worse. Imagine if Covid were replaced by the Black Plague!

Lets' go to chapter 9 of Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:1-7 (ESV)

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

COMING MESSIAH! Once again, God steps outside of time! He is transcendent above current events that consume our time, thoughts, and feelings! He sees the fulfillment of His “future” promises and *links them to the here and now!*

DESPITE a COMING INVASION FROM THE MOST POWERFUL COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, GOD REVEALS a FUTURE PROMISE OF a COMING MESSIAH WHO WILL RESTORE ALL THINGS!

INVASION OF LIGHT. Look at what Jesus did and will do starting with verse 2: if a people or country are walking in darkness, **He is the invasion of Light!** God's people, in Isaiah's day, embroiled in a civil war and unaware of impending invasion from a powerful Satanic empire. What is the Lord's remedy?

TELL THEM ABOUT JESUS!

How does that help them with their current situation, both the civil war and soon-to-come invasion? *It opens their eyes and ears to the Lord!*

MICROSCOPE OF CRISES. I counsel lots of people who tell me about a current crises going on in their lives, whether personal, medical, family, or otherwise. A person, myself included, caught up in something like this, is looking through a microscope at the issue. Remember the last time you literally looked through a microscope? When we're doing so, we can't see what's around is because we're seeing through a lens, darkly (as Paul once said).

INVASION OF LIGHT NEEDED. The Light of Christ needs to invade us focusing on the darkness of our current crises, and open our eyes and ears to the Lord. Jesus IS that Light and when we remind each other of Jesus, we have the chance to see and hear!

We are AHEAD of Isaiah and the people of His day! That gives is a massive advantage. The first coming of Jesus has already happened, His great work on the Cross is done. He is risen, He is ascended, He sits on the throne, and He's coming back! As we celebrate Christmas in a week's time, we're in between He's sitting on the throne and He's coming back!

Verse 3: Jesus has multiplied and restored the nation. Imagine what hope this must have brought to Isaiah and anyone living at that time! Jesus can do the same for the USA!

Verse 4 harkens back to the day of Gideon, when God's people were occupied by the Midianites who were terribly oppressive. Look what it says here and each means something different: yokes are about burdens.

- The Midianites took half of everything God's people had/produced, causing them to starve and be in constant poverty. Jesus breaks **the yoke** of oppression and frees us!
- **The staff** is a sign of following leadership and as Proverbs states: being under a wicked and lawless politician causes the people to mourn. Jesus breaks the staff of bad leadership and is crowned as our King!
- **The rod** is a sign if discipline, and being punished unjustly is a dagger to the heart. Jesus ends injustice for He is perfect, holy justice personified!

The government is on HIS shoulder...the shoulder being a place of display of authority (like wearing a medal). Jesus is King, He is Lord, He is Ruler over all! All things are under His feet! Every enemy and name that is named bows down in complete subjection to Him and calls Him "Lord"!

Verse 7: He has his OWN government and it is lifted up above and dominates all others! The current governments of America and any other country won't be here forever! The corrupt politicians, senators, congressman, and judges are not eternal and will eventually be brought low! Wickedness and lawlessness is temporary!

ETERNAL GOD! The only One Who is eternal is God our Father, God the Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit! And you heard what Isaiah saw and heard when he was caught up to God's throne room: they are Holy! Holy! Holy! We already have a King Who is everlasting, immortal, and forever holy! Power doesn't corrupt Him, no one or nothing tempts Him, nothing can overcome Him, and He will never leave or forsake us!

CURRENT GOV'T. Yes, the current government is wicked and corrupt, flowing in the spirit of Antichrist, but a government is coming led by King Jesus Himself that will be like this:

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

HIS PASSION MAKES IT. It's the passion and love of God that will accomplish this, and you & I are joint-heirs of it!

Let's meditate on this Christmas for it was unto US that the Son was given!!!

- He didn't leave us as orphans when He went back to Heaven, He gave us His Spirit!
- He is coming back soon and bringing His full Kingdom with Him!
- His rule and Kingdom will be forever!
- WE CAN DRAW ON THIS NOW to bring hope, an internal peace, joy, and to empower us to move forward in the commission He's given us!