



## Study #2 - Isaiah 6

### Background

In the first study of our series we saw the prophet Isaiah declaring the LORD's judgement against the city of Jerusalem and the people of Judah. Chapter 5 summarizes the spirit of Judah's rebellion laid bare in the preceding chapters. Isaiah announces 6 woes (5:8-23) which capture the people's sin and as a result, God's judgement is coming (5:24-30). Thus the stage is set for us to meet the man, Isaiah himself, in chapter 6.

Read Isaiah 6 in full.

### Isaiah's vision (6:1-7)

1. What things in Isaiah's vision particularly stand out to you ?
2. Why the time reference in verse 1?  
 Note: King Uzziah's (also known as Azariah) ruled possibly from 791 - 740 BC and during his long reign, Judah enjoyed a period of relative peace and prosperity.
3. Does this vision remind you of other moments in the Bible where an individual or individuals are confronted by the LORD God himself in a vision? What are these and what common elements are present?
4. Why do you think Isaiah reacts the way that he does?
5. If Isaiah has identified himself with God's people in their sin what happens next is an important sign, one that in some ways captures the central message of the whole book

of Isaiah. What do verses 6 & 7 tell us about:

- Isaiah himself?
- God's people?

### **Isaiah's task (6:8-13)**

6. Isaiah is ready to go wherever the LORD sends him but what do you think about the task that is set before him in verses 9 & 10? What exactly is Isaiah being asked to do? By what means is Isaiah to make the people's hearts dull, their ears heavy and their eyes blind?
7. What possible reason could there be for the LORD not wanting His own people to turn and be healed?
8. In Isaiah's follow up question (verse 11) he seems to be accepting of this truth. Choose a word from the list below that most accurately describes the tone of his question? (desperation, curiosity, anger, disappointment, push-back, other)
9. How would you summarise what the LORD is planning to do in what he says in response? What glimmer of hope do you see here? Compare 6:13 with Isaiah 11:1-5

### **Understanding Jesus' ministry in the light of Isaiah 6<sup>1</sup>**

When Jesus explains to his disciples the reason why he teaches in parables he cites Isaiah 6

#### **Background**

In Mark 3:1-34, at this point of his ministry, Jesus makes it clear that people hearing him are responding in one of two ways, resulting in them being either on the inside or on the outside. Jesus goes on, in 4:1-9 in telling the parable of the sower, to explain the reason why this is the case. Those who are on the outside are divided into 3 groups, represented by the unfruitful soils. It is in the context of explaining the meaning of the parable to his disciples that he cites Isaiah 6:9ff.<sup>2</sup>

It's surprising to think that Jesus would want to hold people out of the kingdom of God. After all, are not his parables supposed to provide understanding rather than obscure it? Jesus is teaching a key truth here. That people's response to Him and the word of the kingdom he preaches is governed not so much by their understanding or lack of it but rather it is crucially an issue of the heart. Jesus will simply not accept a half-hearted response. If people were to turn and be forgiven without a complete makeover and renewal of their hearts then fundamentally there would be no need for Jesus to go to the cross. Salvation would be possible by us "pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps". In his

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<sup>1</sup> Tip : Amos - also prophesied during the reign of king Uzziah and his message of judgement being the only means of God's people being completely cleansed and restored is like that of Isaiah's. There will be no restoration or salvation without a prior full and complete cleansing from sin.

<sup>2</sup> The differences in the exact wording of these verses in the Old and New Testaments can be explained in part by the transition from the original Hebrew into Greek.

discussion with Nicodemus in John 3, Jesus makes this absolutely clear.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* John 3:3

In Titus 3 the apostle Paul shows that it is only by means of a complete renewal that salvation is possible:

*3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

In the same way that Judah, in Isaiah's day, would need to pass through the fire of God's fierce judgement and complete destruction so that genuine renewal could take place so too the only way we can be forgiven is through the penalty of our sin being paid for by Jesus on the cross. He faced the fire of God's judgement. His death & destruction was the only way that we could have new life.

### **Issues of the Heart**

Read John 12:36-43

10. According to Isaiah, why wouldn't these people believe in Jesus?
11. What is John, the Gospel writer's explanation for their lack of genuine response to Jesus?
12. What is Luke's take on Isaiah's prophecy in Acts 28:23-28?
13. Why is this such a source of immense hope for us?

### **Pray together**

Turn to the Lord now in prayer in praise and thanks for his goodness. Ask Him to give us and those with whom we are in contact in our daily life hearts that truly respond to Him, recognizing that there is nothing that we can do to win God's favour. We are entirely dependent on Him for his work in renewing our hard and fickle hearts.