

Studies in Isaiah

The Prophets Series

Background of the Book

- General
 - Isaiah one of the best known prophetic books
 - Much literary merit – somewhat lost in translation
 - Many word pictures in Hebrew
 - Spoke of the Kingdom period more than any other prophet
 - Much of what we know about the Messianic Kingdom is due to Isaiah’s visions
- Author
 - Isaiah was “the son of Amoz” – and author (though some divide the book into multiple authorships, there is shaky reason (post 18th c) to support this – and it causes a shadow on the scripture’s own account)
 - Isaiah means “God is Salvation”
 - Isaiah *likely* (is not known for certain) lived in or near Jerusalem. It appears that he had access to the royal court.
 - Jewish tradition puts him as a cousin of King Uzziah.
 - No firm evidence proves this
 - He was married with two sons
 - He ministered at least 58 years (possibly much more)
 - Heb. 11:37 notes the “sawing in two” of the saints of old (without specific reference)
 - Justin Martyr (second century) claims Isaiah was martyred by King Manasseh by being sawed in two
 - Isaiah’s martyrdom is somewhat upheld in tradition
- Time
 - Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekian (kings of Judah)
 - Uzziah (790-739)
 - Jotham (750-732)
 - Ahaz (735-715)
 - Hezekiah (715-686)
 - Isaiah’s prophetic ministry began around _____
 - His prophetic ministry lasted until after Hezekiah died, as he wrote a biography of Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:32). He also wrote of (Assyrian King) Sennacherib’s death (37:38) in 681 BC.
 - Overall, he ministered from at least 739 (the year Uzziah died [see 6:1]) until Sennacherib’s death (681) for a total of at least 58 years.
- Historical Climate
 - These were years of struggle in Israel’s history:

Chapter 1: God's Rebuke of Judah and Jerusalem

The Authority

Isaiah 1:1 (ESV)

¹ *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

- This written account – which would have been penned later – notes of the earliest warnings of Isaiah:
 - Back to the time of Uzziah – through the time of Hezekiah –
 - Thus, the actual prophecies (orally given) cover the times of all of the kings; as a story presented over the course of years
- “vision” – *hazon* (khaw-zone’) – an oracle, dream, revelation. A term of prophetic foresight; almost always inferring divine inspiration as its source
- “concerning Judah and Jerusalem”
 - The direct message was for them to hear and respond to. He was their prophet for that day; we have the benefit today still of what was given to them by way of prophecy

Isaiah 1:2a (ESV)

² *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:*

- Once again, affirming that this is “the word of the Lord”
- “the LORD”
 - When you see capital “LORD” in most modern translation of OT passages
 - Is “yhwh” – “Jehovah” (or “Yahweh”) – Israel’s national proper name for God
 - It is the name of certain identification; a holy name
 - Not even read aloud in texts where it appeared
- “hear o heavens” and “give ear o earth”
 - A calling of the heavens and the earth –
 - The inhabitants of God’s audience (angels)
 - The inhabitants of the earth
 - To hear what Jehovah will say
 - The picture:
 - A great case is being brought: an indictment by God – against Judah
 - The cosmos and the earth are being called to listen in as witnesses

The First Charge: Rebellion

The Nature of their Rebellion

Isaiah 1:2b-3 (ESV)

² *[the LORD has spoken:] “Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. ³ The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”*

- As disobedient children:
 - “children I have reared and brought up”
 - As his own household turning against him
 - He brought Abraham a promised line
 - He preserved that line into a nation
 - He rescued them from slavery in Egypt
 - He restored them to their homeland and granted them a nation
 - “but they have rebelled against me”
 - As prodigals; they turned against the provision of their father
- Less understanding than an animal:
 - Even the ox knows it’s owner – but Judah does not know God
 - The donkey knows it’s master’s crib (a manger, or stall)
 - “but Israel does not know, my people do not understand”

The Substance of Their Rebellion

Isaiah 1:4 (ESV)

⁴ Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.

- “Ah, sinful nation”
 - “sinful” – *hata* (khaw-taw’) – a general sinfulness, lack of purity, having missed the mark (from “miss”) – guilty
- “a people laden with iniquity”
 - “laden” – *kabed* (kaw-bade’) term also translated “great” – “grievous”
 - Pointing to a heavy dose of... (sin)
 - “iniquity”
 - A stronger term for sin
 - *Awon* (ah-vone’) – perversity – evil – gross moral failure
- “offspring of evildoers”
 - Noting the cyclical nature of their scenario:
 - The parents were evildoers – thus the children are evildoers
 - Demonstrating the nature of one not only sinning – but leading a new generation to do the same
 - “children who deal corruptly”
 - They *are* that second generation – who will deal corruptly as their parents did
- “forsaken the LORD”
 - Lit. “relinquished” or “loosened”
 - This term is used identically in the OT as *apostasia* and *aphestemi* (apostasy) are used in the NT.
 - It means that one who *formerly knew* the Lord has intentionally “cut him loose” – as it were – in favor of their own liking
- “despised”
 - Having apostatized, they have thus despised the Lord
 - Lit. “scorned” or “blasphemed”

- Very strong term of rejection
- “Holy One of Israel”
 - This phrase occurs 25 times in the book
 - This term is used to contrast the sins of the people to the pristine Holy (set apart) nature of their God
 - “holy” hinges on “uniqueness” – being “set apart”
 - God presents himself as “the ONE” when he presents himself as *the Holy One*: the strong point is: “there is no other”
- “utterly estranged”
 - KJV renders more literally: “gone away backward”
 - The picture once again is that of apostasy:
 - They were coming forward to the Lord
 - They ceased, stopped,
 - And now are going away backward

The Results of Rebellion

Isaiah 1:5-9 (ESV)

⁵ *Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. ⁶ From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. ⁷ Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. ⁸ And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. ⁹ If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.*

- **A symbolic portrayal:**
 - V5 rhetorical notes:
 - “*why will you be struck down?*”
 - God will discipline them. He will maintain them as his people. God has always nurtured them, cared for them, met their needs, and disciplined them!
 - “*why will you continue to rebel?*”
 - Knowing this, why would they rebel again?
 - They are currently seeing Israel (the northern kingdom) suffering in captivity of Assyria
 - They have been warned already that they would fall upon the very same sword
 - Yet, they continue to remain estranged from God in rebellion
 - God’s commentary: a notice as to the harm they would bring upon themselves. God equates their national harm to that of a wounded body: (v5-6)
 - “*the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint*”
 - It appears he depicts a victim of a beating – literally
 - The head and heart are affected - so severe is it

Interpretational note:

This text was also quoted in Rom 9

Romans 9:27-29 (ESV)

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

Rom. 9-11 depict the nature of the gospel going to the gentiles and returning to Israel “in the end” (prior to the kingdom period)

Thus, this text is noted to have a “near” and a “far” ramification.

- Near – the Assyrians would destroy Judah to an inch of their survival; carry many off & put them into slavery
- Far – via typology – a future desolation would also come upon them – with only a remnant to be saved
 - This is the content of Jesus’ many warnings to them about rejecting himself:
 - **Matthew 23:37-39 (ESV)**
³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”

The call to hear

Isaiah 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

- Isaiah internalizes what the Lord had said:
 - Not only are they *likened* to Sodom & Gomorrah
 - Isaiah adds insult to injury by actually *calling them* by those names
 - “rulers of Sodom”
 - “people of Gomorrah”

The Second Charge: Insincere Worship

Isaiah 1:11-15 (ESV)

¹¹ “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. ¹² “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. ¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am

weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Their Worship Was Phony

¹¹ “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. ¹² “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?”

- “multitude of your sacrifices”
 - God sees their sacrifices as nothing more than a human tradition or perhaps a follied attempt at his pleasure – yet without repentance
 - His point throughout the text is Israel’s continued sin.
 - In this section he speaks strongly against their fake worship actions which bear no truth because they do not come from sincere hearts
 - **Isaiah 1:4 (ESV)**
⁴ Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.
 - “multitude” may also refer to a doubling up of sacrifices in the thoughts that they would reap God’s favor
 - The burnt offerings were intended as the means of bringing about reconciliation for sin – and restoration to God
 - But they never stopped their sin – they had no intention, no desire, for reconciliation and restoration to God.
 - Rather, their worship was ritualistic, hollow, and possibly viewed as a sort of sacramentalistic means of instigating God’s favor (a selfish basis for worship)
- “I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats”
 - God’s delight in temple worship is in the contrite hearts of his people
 - For those who are “laden with iniquity” who have “forsaken the Lord” he has no delight in seeing them conduct the motions of worship – without any heartfelt conviction concerning him whatsoever
 - This is the same question the Lord put to Saul:
 - **1 Samuel 15:22 (ESV)**
²² And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.
 - Saul had disobeyed God on an order for the utter destruction of the Amalekites – he kept the king alive to taunt him – he kept the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord
 - God stated that he desired *obedience* rather than *sacrifices*
 - He makes the same assessment here:
 - “I do not delight in the blood of bulls...”
- “who has required of you this trampling of my courts”

- The fact is: they are doing everything they are supposed to be doing: (burnt offerings, blood offerings, etc)
 - God himself *had required* the offering of the sacrifices and each of the worship practices he notes
 - However, they *are not doing that...* they are going through motions
- But, they are doing it in an utterly contemptuous and insincere way because they presume to worship without obeying God – they present their sacrifices without repentance
- Their worship – which should be honoring to God – is nothing more than “the trampling of my courts”
 - “trample” – Heb. *ramas* – a term denoting a treading down, to stamp, or to violently stomp down something
 - This is the root of the term used in Isaiah 63
 - **Isaiah 63:3 (ESV)**

³ *“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.*
 - As the Lord violently stamping out grapes – the same root term is used to refer to the Judeans in their carrying out of their worship practice

God Detests It

¹³ *Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.* ¹⁴ *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.*

- **The Command: “Bring no more vain offerings”**
 - “vain” – Heb. *shaw* (shahv) –
 - Familiar with the typical translation/interpretation of vanity: “uselessness” “purposelessness”
 - This term also carries a strong theological connotation in its very definition
 - A desolating, idolatrous and deceptive evil – as a condition – which results in useless worship (as if God does not know one’s true motivations)
 - This is the term of the third commandment: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain”
 - The implication is to make light of that which is holy – to treat as thoughtless that which should consume one’s concentration in grasp
 - Overall: it is to make (or put) that which is useless, pointless, without merit in God’s place in most OT usages
 - The issue is not *only* uselessness of the choice made-

- The issue is also the usurping of God’s rightful stead in worship, glory and honor
 - **The Examples (of vain worship):**
 - *incense is an abomination to me*
 - the burning of incense is a prescribed element of OT temple (or tabernacle) worship
 - It was to be used according to specific requirements
 - **Exodus 30:34-38 (ESV)**

³⁴ *The LORD said to Moses, “Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part),³⁵ and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.³⁶ You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you.³⁷ And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD.³⁸ Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people.”*
 - Incense was symbolic of prayer:
 - **Psalm 141:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ *O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!* ² *Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!*
 - **Revelation 5:8 (ESV)**

⁸ *And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*
 - Here, the Lord notes that it is “an abomination” (to burn incense!)
 - *Toeba* (to-ay-baw’) – one of three terms that can refer to an abomination. This is the strongest of the three.
 - An abomination is defined as “things or practices abhorrent to God”
 - Thus, incense – representing prayers to God – of people who are not *listening* to God – is an abomination to him.
 - This end result is that he is being sought out for only what he might give to the worshipper – the worshipper has no interest in God’s desires – only his own.
 - He is using God as a means to an end – like the pagan gods are used
 - *New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.*
 - Once again, new moon and Sabbath celebrations are required. These are the “regular” worship events.

- Convocations speaks generally to all of the special religious observances (the 7 feasts)
 - Not only are the regular worship festivities a loss – but the people cannot even muster sincerity for the special Holy days
- God’s assessment: “I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.”
 - “solemn assembly” –
 - The nature of the worship assembly – to be before God with contrite, sincere hearts – in worship – in repentance
 - The nature of what *should be the norm* of the “new moon and Sabbath” meetings and the special “convocations”
 - “iniquity”
 - *Awen* (ah’-ven) – the character of those who are without God; corrupted by sin, vile, corrupted
 - *The idea:*
 - The Holy things of God are being handled with hearts of iniquity; the characteristic of God’s enemies; pagans; gentiles with their false gods
 - God says, “I cannot endure” it
- **The conclusion:**

¹⁴ *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.*

- God *hates* their worship
 - *Sane* (saw-nay’) a term God uses to refer to his feelings about his enemies!
 - He doesn’t say he hates Judah – he says he hates their worship, which he requires, and should love
 - “I am weary of bearing them”
 - The image is of God having to lift a great weight in order to tolerate their worship practices

God Has Rejected It

¹⁵ *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.*

- The end result: God will reject their worship completely – he will not see, he will not hear
 - ¹⁵ *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you*
 - “spread out your hands” refers to calling on God’s provision, help, guidance (this is their motive for the false worship). It is a typical posture for prayer:
 - **1 Kings 8:22 (ESV)**
²² *Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven,*

- **Ezra 9:5 (ESV)**
⁵ *And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God,*
- **Psalm 88:9 (ESV)**
⁹ *my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you.*
- *even though you make many prayers, I will not listen*
 - referring to the sheer numbers of prayers
 - even though they be many, God will not hear
- *your hands are full of blood.*
 - Reaffirmation of their sin: when your hands are raised in prayer, I see blood on them.
 - He will note later in the chapter the nature of their iniquity and the blood on their hands:
 - **Isaiah 1:23 (ESV)**
²³ *Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.*
 - *(among other things)* they are lovers of self-gratification: the rulers are friends with thieves, taking bribes, and finding external payments for the jobs they should do for the love of justice

The Solution: Repentance

The Nature of Repentance

Isaiah 1:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil,* ¹⁷ *learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.*

- The nature of repentance expounded upon: to turn from sin and turn to righteousness
 - while the term “repent” is not used, the sentiment is crystal clear:
 - *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean*
 - v15 notes, “your hands are full of blood”
 - and the solution is “wash and make yourselves clean”
 - *remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes*
 - “from before my eyes” – in their worship practices, their continued sin was merely brought into God’s presence
 - With no repentant heart, they did not draw near to worship, but to win an appeasement for their continued sin
 - *cease to do evil,* ¹⁷ *learn to do good*
 - The full nature of repentance again revealed:
 - “cease to do evil” – to turn from sin

- “learn to do good” – to turn to righteousness
- Some specific sins exposed (Note: the issue of “justice” here are not to be confused with our modern calls to “social justice” in the gospel)
 - *Seek justice,*
 - “justice” - Heb. *mishpat* (mish-pot’) “judgment” or “verdict” – a righteous judicial decree – concerning law
 - This is not pointing to the problem of oppressed, fatherless and widows not having the riches of others – it is pointing to them not receiving the legal justice of others
 - He expounds in the rest of the text:
 - ***Isaiah 1:23 (ESV)***
²³ *Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them.*
 - “princes” – Heb. *sar*, “the head person” “governor” “ruler” – not necessarily the son of a king, but the “man in charge”
 - The issue is that the rulers who are supposed to *uphold the law* are instead after their own financial advancement!
 - “everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.”
 - Thus, they are not seeking justice – but payment.
 - The end result is that those who do not make a good living cannot bribe them, and cannot thus get any legal justice from the law.
 - *They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them.*
 - *Correct oppression*
 - the remedy to injustice: “correct oppression”
 - “correct” Heb. *asher* (aw-share’) – “to be straight with” “to be honest” or “to relieve”
 - The idea is that of “having integrity with”
 - “oppression” Heb. *hamos* (khaw-motse’) – difficult to translate:
 - Technically: “violent” or “violence” – or “robber” “one who oppresses” would be accurate
 - Translationally, this text can be handled two ways:
 - Stringently it says: “deal straight with oppression” which can mean “help the oppressed” or “act justly toward the oppressors”
 - Translators go both ways:
 - “correct oppression” – ESV
 - “encourage the oppressed” – NIV
 - “relieve the oppressed” – KJV
 - “reprove the ruthless” – NASB
 - ESV is more accurate in the straight translational process
 - The idea is the same either way:
 - “deal straight with oppression”
 - That means – “relieve the oppressed”

- And it means – “correct the oppressor”

- *bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause*
 - the fatherless child is poor; as is the widow
 - these are they who have no means to finance justice – when the princes are looking for a bribe (v23)
 - To correct the situation, their cases are to be properly heard by judges who execute right judgment:
 - “bring justice” (to the fatherless)
 - “justice” – Heb. *shapat* (shaw-fat’) “to judge” in the strict sense – irrespective of guilt or innocence – it means to either vindicate or punish – but to do it justly, rightly
 - “plead” (the widow’s cause)
 - “plead” – Heb. *rib* (reeb) lit. “to grapple” “to wrangle” – to contend for – to seriously engage as opposed to not put forth effort in

The Decision To Be Made

Isaiah 1:18-20 (NIV)

¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; ²⁰ but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD

- This call is a call to Judah to return to her senses: to be rational
 - “reason” Heb. *yakah* (yaw-kah’) – “to decide, justify or convict” – this is another legal “court” term, used for the argumentation and negotiation of a case:
 - God’s call is to reason – with him – over the issue which he *will* judge
 - He will offer pros for the right decision
 - He will offer cons for the wrong decision
 - He will make no mistake, however: she will choose and he will respond accordingly. There is no question what will come – base on her choice.
 - The idea is that if Judah “reasons” the facts, she will make the right decision

The Results of Obedience

- **Their sins will be forgiven:**
 - *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*
 - As God has always granted, his grace will cover their sins if they would repent.
 - their “pointless” sacrifices would be accepted
 - their weary worship would be received
 - their prayers would be heard
 - The contrast is granted between guilt an innocence: the guilt of their continued sin and disdain for their worship – and the innocence that comes

from being forgiven; when sins are turned from, and worship is offered in sincerity

- Guilt is as red like scarlet or crimson
- Innocence is white like snow or wool
- This imagery would unmistakably remind them of the price for sin: blood
- **They will remain in the Land** – untouched by their enemies
 - ¹⁹ *If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land;*
 - “eat the best from the land” is the peaceful existence without judgment
 - At home – with good producing crops – a bounty to enjoy
 - This promise is reminiscent of God’s original promises for them: Israel was given Canaan with this promise in mind
 - **Deuteronomy 6:10-12 (ESV)**
¹⁰ *“And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build,¹¹ and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full,¹² then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*
 - **Deuteronomy 6:20-25 (ESV)**
²⁰ *“When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?’²¹ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.²² And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes.²³ And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers.²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.²⁵ And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.’*

The Results of Disobedience

- **Destruction**
 - ²⁰ *but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*
 - “devoured by the sword” is what Isaiah eluded to earlier:
 - **Isaiah 1:5 (ESV)**
⁵ *Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.*

- **Isaiah 1:7 (ESV)**
⁷ *Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.*
- The “reasoning together” the Lord mentioned earlier does *not* include an alternative to his punishment for disobedience:
 - If they disobey – he *will devour them* by the swords of their enemies (Assyria)
 - If they obey – he *will sustain them* in their homeland, in peace
 - He affirms this with his vow:
 - *For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*
 - Thus, “this is an unconditional promise” – it *will be* as I have said, and there is nothing you can do but choose wisely.

A Coming Renovation

The Current Condition Restated

Isaiah 1:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ *How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.* ²² *Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water.* ²³ *Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them.*

Note: parallelism in the text. Each line represents a former and **present** reality – (then restated)

²¹ How the faithful city has **become a whore**, (she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but **now murderers**.)

²² Your silver has **become dross**, your best wine **mixed with water**. (²³ Your princes are **rebels and companions of thieves**.)

- ²¹ *How the faithful city has become a whore*
 - Imagery of a faithful spouse – who *turned into* a whore
 - Faithful – Heb. *aman* (aw-man’) – same root as *amen* (aw-mane’) – which transliterates “amen”
 - *Aman* – the verb form – the process of faithfulness
 - *Amen* – the adverb form (truly) – the quality of faithfulness
 - both carry the same root meaning: to believe, to be faithful, to be permanent or true
 - the procedural actions of a good wife – *she is faithful*
 - whore – Heb. *zana* (zah-nah’) – also a verb – whoredom (as an action) – “to go whoring” – “harlotry” – committing adultery.
 - Term carries imagery of being “fed and wanton” – the idea of dissatisfaction with one’s husband’s life provisions – thus taking

payment of another. It is not about sex – but about provision being sought from another. Thus, translated “whore” or “harlot” and not merely “fornication”

- This term is used to designate a professional prostitute - not just an unfaithful wife
 - Another term: Heb. *Naap* – (naw-apf’) – is a term for a “regular” fornicator or adulterer
 - *Naap* is at times used for a harlot – but *zana* is not used for a fornicator who is unpaid for their acts
- When used figuratively, the idea of *harlotry* refers to a spiritual departure from the Lord; in particular to idols.
 - this imagery is extremely common in OT – God frequently calls Israel a harlot
 - the idea is that she is never satisfied with his provision – she desires to chase after the other gods for their gifts as well
 - i.e. **Hosea 4:12-13 (ESV)**
 - ¹² *My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore.*
 - ¹³ *They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore (zana), and your brides commit adultery (naap).*
 - Note: oak, poplar, terebinth
 - The trees themselves are an issue later in this (Isaiah) text as well
 - The trees represent the idols of wood, and the forests where such shrines of wood are carved into gardens, etc-
 - Note. Hosea 4:12 aboven-
- *she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.*
 - “justice” - Heb. *mishpat* (mish-pot’) “judgment” or “verdict” – a righteous judicial decree – concerning law
 - KJV translates “it was full of judgment” – but not in the sense of God judging the city’s sin (though that is coming) – but in the sense of the city “having good judgment” about her -
 - *Mishpat* used also in v. 17: ¹⁷ *learn to do good; seek justice (mishpat), correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.*
 - It is used of the exact subject here:
 - Just as God condemned them in v.17, so he speaks the same condemnation here, explaining that the rulers abuse the law for their own gain
 - “she who was full of (justice)” – refers to “the city”

- (Note: ESV has interesting sentence structure here that I disagree with. I think “she who was full of justice” goes in the same sentence with “righteousness lodged in her”)
 - Remember the parallelism: “the faithful city” in the first portion of the verse parallels with “she who was” in the second portion
 - Thus, “the city” – or Jerusalem – was full of justice at a time past
 - Now, she is not
 - “righteousness lodged in her”
 - Seems a strange thing to say of a woman – but remember, this is the city of Jerusalem being depicted
 - Those who “lodged” – or lived – in Jerusalem were once righteous
 - Now they are not:
 - “but now murderers”
 - Where the righteous once dwelled, now murderers dwell – in the very lodging in the very city
 - In contrast with “justice” and “righteousness” are murderers
 - Because the issue of justice in this chapter is tied specifically to the ignoring of the cries of the widow and orphan, it seems that the “murder” – in contrast to the former “justice” – is also thus tied
 - Thus, by their deaf ear to the cries for justice of those who cannot afford it – they are bringing them to death
 - Perhaps they starve because of a wealthy landowner who bribes the princes to ignore their plight, etc.
- ²² *Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water.*
 - Dross – Heb. *sig* (seeg) – “dross” – the burn off of refined silver or gold – the trash collected and thrown away from the refining process
 - Dross is thus the antithesis of silver in the text
 - One’s silver turning to dross refers to one’s “turning back” to a former state that one has been elevated from
 - A sister term: *sug* (soog) – also referring to dross - *soog* is indicative of “the returning to dross” of a refined metal – it is used of apostatizing in the OT, meaning “to turn back”
 - The same idea is represented here:
 - Silver – that which has been refined – has returned to a state of being laden with dross
 - They have apostatized –
 - From faithful – to whoredom
 - From justice – to murderers
 - From silver – to dross
 - From choice wine – to watered down
 - “best wine” – bit of over-emphasis by ESV – simply “wine” or “drink” (meaning wine) in the Heb. –
 - Wine is made by juice, water & sugar. Once fermented, people would add water to wine to stretch it out a bit – the water would mix very naturally, but diminish the quality of the wine
 - A good rendering would be “your best wine became watered down”

- ²³ *Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves.*
 - “princes” – Heb. *sar*, “the head person” “governor” “ruler” – not necessarily the son of a king, but the “man in charge”
 - The rulers who are supposed to *uphold the law* are instead after their own financial advancement as noted in the next phrase:
 - “*everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.*”
 - Thus, they are not seeking justice – but payment.
 - The end result is that those who do not make a good living cannot bribe them, and cannot thus get any legal justice from the law.
 - *They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them.*
 - The widow – and her child, the fatherless – have no financial means to bribe the rulers for their justice.
 - Thus, (v21) “she who was full of justice” with “righteousness lodged in her” is “now murderers”

A Renovation Foretold

Isaiah 1:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ *Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. ²⁵ I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. ²⁶ And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”*

- ²⁴ *Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:*
 - “LORD of hosts” “Mighty One of Israel”
 - God usurps the princes – or judges – here
 - Israel, being a theocracy, has God as her ultimate King. He is taking rank and about to clean house.
 - He will shortly restore the judges as they should be – with those who will listen to him and do what he commands
 - “Holy One of Israel” is the common theme of God’s declaration of himself in Isaiah – used 25 times
 - That term was used in v.4 – as it normally is – to contrast Israel’s sin with God’s holiness
 - In this sentence, the similar “Mighty One of Israel” is used, demonstrating the distinction from his power and theirs
 - Their power was over widows and orphans
 - His power would be over princes and judges
- *“Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.*”
 - “my enemies” and “my foes”
 - Just as silver and dross are to be separated – God calls those unrighteous in Judah his *enemies*
 - The first term (enemies) is Heb. *tsar* (Tsar) – carries the weight of “an opponent” – or – “those who battle against” one – “adversary”

- He is now not focused on the punishment of the old guard – but a restoration of a new guard who will do what is right
 - “judges” and “counselors”
 - “judges” – same term rendered “justice” in v. 23 (*bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause*) – Heb. *shapat* (shaw-fat’) “to judge” in the strict sense – irrespective of guilt or innocence – it means to either vindicate or punish – but to do it justly, rightly
 - “counselors” – Heb. *yaas* – (yaw-ats’) – this is the noun referring to the individuals who will administer such justice – “deliberate or resolve” – “to advise well” – “to counsel”
 - “as at the beginning”
 - Speaking of “the faithful city” (which became a whore) – he speaks of “the beginning” of Jerusalem – not the nation
 - Thus, it would be the days of the reign of David and Solomon he speaks of.
 - In those times the city was a faithful city
- *Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.*”
 - She will be a faithful city once again

Isaiah 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ *Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.*

- “Zion shall be redeemed by justice”
 - Ironically, the justice she refused of her own sin, the Lord will purge her with.
 - “justice” - Heb. *mishpat* (mish-pot’) “judgment” or “verdict” – a righteous judicial decree – concerning law
 - This is the very term used in v17 of the oppressed not receiving the legal justice of others (because the princes looked for bribes)
 - Now, the Lord himself will grant such justice – beginning with the evil princes themselves
- “and those in her who repent”
 - Even in this early day, repentance was a required facet of the restoration from sin
 - “repent” is Heb. *shub* – (shoob) – “to return” “turn back” “be restored”
 - This is the antithesis of apostasy
 - noted in v. 4: **Isaiah 1:4 (ESV)**

⁴ *Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! **They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.***

 - “forsaken the LORD” (*azab*- forsaken) Lit. “relinquished” or “loosened” -- term is used identically in the OT as *apostasia* and *aphestemi* (apostasy) are used in the NT.
 - It means that one who *formerly knew* the Lord has intentionally “cut him loose” – as it were – in favor of their own liking
 - They “turned away”
 - Here, a remnant (not all) of those who had turned away will “turn back”

- “by righteousness”
 - The repentant are redeemed “by righteousness” rather than “by justice” – implication being that they are received because of their repentance – not judged and destroyed because of their apostate persistence in doing evil

The Unrepentant Shall Be Destroyed

The LORD’s statements in vs 25-27 are oriented toward the repentance of a remnant that will be refined and restored in repentance.

Verse 28 to the end of the chapter is essentially a big “but” for those who refuse repentance and continue in their rebellion.

Isaiah 1:27-31 (ESV)

((²⁷ Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.)) ²⁸ But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. ²⁹ For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. ³⁰ For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. ³¹ And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.

Rebels, sinners, forsakers -

- “rebels and sinners”
 - “rebel” – Heb. *pasha* (paw-shah’) – to break away from – to trespass –to revolt
 - Term used:
 - As verb in V. 2 “...children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled (*pasha*) against me”
 - Sister terms:
 - *Sara* – v. 5 “why do you keep on rebelling?” (turn away, rebel)
 - *Mara* – v.20 “if you refuse and rebel...” (to be disobedient, rebel)
 - *Sarar* – v. 23 “your princes are rebels” (to turn away, rebel)
 - “rebel” is the common sentiment describing the disobedient in this prophecy
 - Rebellion has the same root idea as apostasy (to know what is right, but turn from it), though without possibly the spiritual “rejection of truth” fueling it
 - They have refused to obey
 - We do not *know* that they actually rejected their beliefs about the Lord – only that they reject following through on them
 - “sinners” – *hatta* (khat-tah’) “an offender” “a criminal” “one accounted guilty”
 - A more general term for those who are judged to be guilty by the Lord
 - Does not presume a turning away, as “rebellion” does, but assumes an equally sinful estate; *possibly* these were not so intentionally so
- “broken together”
 - Heb. states simply “destroyed”
 - *Sheber* (sheb’- ber) – “destroyed” or “destruction” –

- From *shabar*, “fracture” “break” “broken”
 - Overall carries the picture of destruction by forceful breaking up
- “those who forsake the Lord”
 - *Azab yhw* (forsake Jehovah)
 - Definitely *does* indicate full apostasy – turning from the teachings and direction by spiritual rejection of truths formerly accepted
 - *Azab* – used in v.4
 - “forsaken the LORD” (*azab*- forsaken) Lit. “relinquished” or “loosened” - - term is used identically in the OT as *apostasia* and *aphestemi* (apostasy) are used in the NT.
 - It means that one who *formerly knew* the Lord has intentionally “cut him loose” – as it were – in favor of their own liking
 - They “turned away”
- “shall be consumed”
 - *Kala* (kah-lah’) – “consumed” “brought to end” “destroyed utterly”
 - Probably not distinct from the end of the “rebels and sinners” who are “broken together”
 - Both groups are destroyed – utterly – with a violent hand
- COMPARISON
 - “sinner” – is *possibly* in ignorant disobedience
 - “rebels” – are definitely *not* ignorant in their disobedience – they have chosen very specifically to ignore God’s laws
 - “forsaker” (those who forsake) have not only chosen to disobey- but have chosen to not believe, care, or give any heed to the Lord’s voice at all
 - All together:
 - They are under the same condemnation. The Lord warns them all here: repent or fall under my wrath equally

They/You Comparison

V. 29 speaks of “they” and “you” in ESV

- “they” shall be ashamed
- “you” shall blush

There is some confusion as to whether this should be “they” or “you” in v 29. Translations are equally split.

- The oldest (including Qumran 1QIsa) Hebrew texts note 3rd person plural (they) switching to 2nd person (you) as the ESV, KJV, ASV note.
- Others change the seemingly random 3rd person (they) to 2nd person (you) to keep harmony in the text, such as NIV, NASB, RSV

Parallelism:

Because the texts in this section all incorporate parallelism, and the parallelism is **synonymous parallelism** (or **synonymism**) – where the first half of the poetic line is mirrored in the second

half – then I believe the “they” which switches abruptly to “you” is intended to draw attention to the reader that “they *are* you.”

- “**they** shall be ashamed of the oaks **you** desired”
- “**you** shall blush for the gardens that **you** have chosen”

“they” and “you” are one and the same: a literary device to draw the hearer’s attention to the fact that *he is who is being discussed*.

Shame for Their Idolatry:

²⁹ *For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen.*

- “they shall be ashamed” – parallel with “you shall blush for”
 - Ashamed - *bosh* (boosh) – technically “to pale” – by implication “to be ashamed”
 - The picture of one’s actions being discovered – brought to account – followed by a paling of the skin
 - Blush – *hapar* (khaw-fare’) – very similar to *bosh* – “to be ashamed” – from the idea of one having been detected in their actions – “to be put to shame”
 - ESV uses “blush” to demonstrate parallelism with “pale” –
 - “be embarrassed” is a more technical translation
 - NIV “be disgraced”
 - NASB “be embarrassed”
- “the oaks that you desired” – parallel with – “the gardens that you have chosen”
 - Oaks – Gardens
 - “oaks” can conjure several images – but paralleled with “gardens” it almost necessitates a reference to idolatry:
 - Both terms “oaks” (along with other shady trees) and “gardens” are used throughout the OT to refer to the places of the shrines to idols; particularly the Canaanite gods that preceded Israel’s inhabitation of the land.
 - Under the shade of large trees – for outdoor shrines – and in beautiful gardens adorned with their cast, carved or molded idols are popular places for the practice of idolatry. The Lord notes this numerous times in other texts:
 - **Isaiah 57:5 (ESV)**
⁵ *you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?*
 - **Isaiah 65:3 (ESV)**
³ *a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks;*
 - **Hosea 4:13 (ESV)**
¹³ *They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth,*

because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery.

○ **Deuteronomy 12:2 (ESV)**

² *You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.*

- Such may also speak to the substance of wood idols, being made out of “oak” and other trees

○ **Jeremiah 3:9 (ESV)**

⁹ *Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree.*

- Interpretational Summary:

- “You will be caught – exposed - and embarrassed in your idolatry”

Their Exposure Expounded Upon

Isaiah 1:30 (ESV)

³⁰ *For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water.*

Still using the terms “oak” and “gardens” – which represented their idolatry... only in this case:

- The oak leaf “wITHERS”
 - The oak – as the location for idol worship – was a place of shade as Hosea 4 notes: ¹³ *They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good.*
 - Now – with God’s judgment – the exposure and shame of their idolatry will make that oak tree like one whose leaf has withered:
 - They will be exposed
 - There will be no covering – no shade
- The garden is “without water”
 - The gardens – as locations for idol worship – were places of beauty with lush greenery – dedicated to their gods. They were secluded, with green walls of shrubberies to shield the worship areas from the outside world.
 - Now, they are without water
 - The greenery is dead from drought – leaves and flower gone – nothing but twigs remain. They are exposed like the oaks with withered leaves
 - The beauty is gone – their purpose thwarted – the worshipper exposed

A Metaphorical Portrayal of Their Destruction

Isaiah 1:31 (ESV)

³¹ *And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.*

- “the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark”
 - The man and his deeds together provide a combustible whole

- “the strong” – as in: “the mighty man” – the powerful, dependable among Judah – those one might hope to hide behind in battle
 - “become tinder”
 - “tinder” – *ne’oret* (neh-oh’-reth) – that which is “shaken out” – as in the flax when beaten. This produced a dust-like highly combustible dried plant base – like starting a fire with hay
 - “his work” – idolatry – making of idols, shrines, gardens, etc.
 - “a spark” – that which will set himself on fire
- “and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.”
 - The man – and his “work” (the erection of shrines, idols, and false worship) will burn together
 - The shrines and idols will be destroyed
 - The worshipper will be destroyed
 - This likely notes two things:
 - The temporal destruction: Babylonian invasion whereby:
 - The strong man is killed (unlike the weak, who may not be engaged in battle, but carried into slavery)
 - His shrines and idols are destroyed by literal fire
 - The eternal destruction: of the soul
 - Fire awaits those who knew not the Lord –
 - His false god will burn with him – having a demonic host most likely –
 - “none shall quench them”
 - As noted in Isaiah 66 – speaking of the time *after the new heavens and new earth* (v 22 notes this) - that the citizens of the new earth:
 - **Isaiah 66:24 (ESV)**
²⁴ “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

Chapter 6: Isaiah’s Call

Isaiah 6:1-4 (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.

Background

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died

- Uzziah died in 739 BC. He was the first of the four kings Isaiah prophesied under
 - Uzziah was a good king for the most part (2 Chron 26)
 - He was one of those kings who “did right in the eyes of the Lord”
 - He warred with Philistines and Arabians successfully (by God’s blessing)
 - He built fortified towers, had a 300,000 man strong army, even had the people do design and implemented automated weaponry that shot arrows and huge stones
 - End result: between him and Jewish Jeroboam II (in the northern kingdom) Jewish territories were restored almost to the extent they had been during David & Solomon’s times
 - His prowess, success and strength made him proud
 - He attempted to minister in the temple
 - God struck him with leprosy
 - He remained a leper until he died
 - He lived outside of his own compound
 - His son ruled the kingdom in his stead (Jotham)
- The climate:
 - Judah had been extremely healthy politically and economically
 - The people were spiritually relaxed, however. They were doing as successful people tend to do: depending on their own supply and serving their own interests.
- “the year”
 - This means Isaiah’s prophecy could have been prior to the time – or after – of Uzziah’s death by a full 12 months in either direction
 - the noting of this year draws a contrast between the dead king and the Living, Eternal God

The Setting

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above 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. ³And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

The Lord on his Throne

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

- “Lord” (not LORD) – Heb. *adonai* (ad-oh-nahee’)
 - *Adon* is the root, meaning “master” “lord” of a person in a lower stead – the “master of a servant” – referring to the person occupying the position of Lord
 - *Adonai* is a personal name of God which holds that ramification
- “I saw the Lord”

- Difficult text here.
 - To Moses, God said:
 - **Exodus 33:20 (ESV)**
²⁰ But, he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”
 - Isaiah expected as much, himself, as he noted:
 - **Isaiah 6:5 (ESV)**
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!”
 - However, John explains:
 - **John 12:41 (ESV)**
⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.
 - Quoting this very chapter (v10) he notes “Isaiah...saw his glory and spoke of him”
 - John speaks this of Christ – the context being that Jesus had performed many miracles and the people did not believe.
- Thus: “I saw the Lord” refers to Isaiah having seen the Christ – Messiah – the second person of the godhead; he saw the pre-incarnate Christ, rather than the fullness of the father, whom no one can see and live (John 1:18, 1 Tim 6:16)
- *Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up*
 - In opposition to the human king – who had died – God was sitting on his throne, where he had always been
 - “sitting” is a more deliberate term than it seems here:
 - It involves a sense of settlement, and is used specifically also of a judge “seated” in the sense that he has establishment of his position
 - It is used of “dwelling” in an area, as one who leaves one area to establish, tame, and subdue a new territory
 - “*throne*” Heb. *kisse* – (kis-say’) – lit. “seat of honor” “throne”
 - The throne of a King was frequently covered with fabric, inlaid with gold or jewels – and highly ornate
 - This throne was noted to be “high and lifted up” – it was indeed an exceptionally lofty throne – it was apparently *very* high:
- *and the train of his robe filled the temple.*
 - The train, flowing from his robe, filling the temple, accentuates the “high and lifted up” nature of this throne
 - Because the Lord was known to dwell between the wings of the seraphs on the ark of the covenant, many Jews thought God was in fact quite small in physical dimension
 - Isaiah notes here that the temple itself cannot contain the train of his robe
 - The word “train” (*shul*) means “hem” in other places it is used
 - A “train” as we think – of a wedding dress, etc – is not exactly the picture
 - Rather, the hem section of his robe: a wide border at the bottom, normally (in earthly kings) encrusted in gold, with jewels, etc.
 - This hem was used of robes in kingly and priestly function

- The hem was a mark which distinguished the position – a mark of identity – for people holding a certain rank
 - Thus: God’s *hem of his robe* filling the temple – gives even a more gargantuan image of God’s size
- “temple”
 - Some mistakenly think that Isaiah has this vision in the physical temple; seeing God’s robe train filling it
 - The picture is that of God *in a temple* in his vision: this is the temple in heaven, of which the earthly temple is a copy
 - **Micah 1:2-3 (ESV)**
² *Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. ³ For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.*
 - **Revelation 11:19 (ESV)**
¹⁹ *Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.*
 - **Hebrews 8:5 (ESV)**
⁵ *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”*
 - **Hebrews 9:23-24 (ESV)**
²³ *Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*

His Attendants

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.

- “seraphim” – (seraph)
 - Means “burning ones”
 - One of three orders of angels, the 2nd highest order (below Cherubim and above “common” angels)
 - Seraphim always have six wings
 - Cherubs have 2 or 4
 - Angels have none (look like young men, as they are always described) – though they may have some that are not described. We do not see them fly, just “appear” and disappear.
 - Seraphim are characterized by unceasing worship (here and in Revelation), which is what they are doing here
- “six wings”

- 2 covering face – indicative of humility; covering their face before God
- 2 covering feet – indicative also of humility
- 2 kept them flying
 - ESV notes “above him ‘stood’ the seraphim”
 - *Amad* certainly means “stand” – but also means “set” or “were appointed to” or “remained” –etc.
 - They were in fact flying, with their middle set of wings.
- We see seraphs functioning identically – with a bit more information – in the book of Revelation:
 - **Revelation 4:8-10 (ESV)**
 - ⁸ *And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”* ⁹ *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,* ¹⁰ *the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne...*
 - John calls them “living creatures” – a bit vague, to say the least – but his description notes them to be seraphs:
 - Six wings
 - Singing the same song as they sang in Isaiah’s vision

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

- The seraphs sing of two attributes of God: Holiness and Glory
 - “*holy, holy, holy*”
 - Most likely referencing three personalities of the trinity
 - Isaiah emphasizes the Lord’s holiness throughout the book:
 - 24 times calling him “the holy one of Israel”
 - Other times “holy one”
 - It is possible that this vision – which spawned his calling & his ministry – comes from the memory of this vision
 - “*the whole earth is full of his glory*”
 - “glory” refers to the physical manifestation and revelation of God’s nature

The Power of their Worship

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

- “foundations of the thresholds” – doorposts stood on these large foundational stones in ancient architecture
 - That they “shook” is indicative of an exceptional force – likened to an earthquake would be necessary on the earthy temple – the Heavenly temple (one might think) even more so

“the house was filled with smoke”

- This smoke is indicative of the manifest glory of God
 - **Isaiah 4:5 (ESV)**
⁵ Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy.
- It was also seen by the Seraph worshipping in Revelation:
 - **Revelation 15:7-8 (ESV)**
⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.
- the whole experience is also somewhat likened to Mount Sinai:
 - **Exodus 19:18 (ESV)**
¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.
- Overall, this shaking and smoking condition brings a sense of awe and notice to those present of God’s holiness and glory.

The Cleansing of Isaiah

Isaiah 6:5-7 (ESV)

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.”

His Confession:

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

Being in the presence of God – seeing the holiness of God – hearing the confessions of these exceptional creatures declaring God’s holiness – altogether bring Isaiah to a place of utter enlightenment to his own sinfulness.

- Point being: we all lack a true vision of our sinfulness until we compare ourselves to the holiness of God Himself
 - We feel adequate when comparing to other sinful beings – but when we compare ourselves to God such adequacy rapidly vanishes
 - Here, even the righteous angels – themselves *not* sinful – are overcome with God’s holiness to the point that they declare “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*”

“Woe is me!”

- “woe” – Heb. *oy* (o’ee) – an expressing indicating great despair – hopelessness –
- *Oy* is onomatopoeic
 - It *sounds* like the cry that it represents, thus it has a mournful feel to it that goes beyond its mere definition
 - Isaiah is literally *crying out* his lament – his recognition and fear – of his lack of worthiness to be in his current situation
- Also interesting:
 - Isaiah (prior to this moment, apparently) had been railing on Judah for five chapters about *her* unrighteousness – and pointing out her terrible sins before God
 - In this moment, he assigns himself *with her* in her stead

“For I am lost”

- A single term represents this sentiment:
 - *Dama* (daw-maw’) lit. “to be cut off” – to perish – to be destroyed – undone utterly – *to be put out of existence*
 - NIV: “I am ruined”
 - KJV: “I am undone”
 - ESV choice of “lost” here is most likely applying the spiritual application of it – to be “lost” in the sense of being separated from God – knowing his sinfulness, Isaiah recognizes his unworthiness before God
- In context:
 - It seems that Isaiah cried outwardly as he spoke; fearing that he literally was about to be destroyed in God’s presence

Three Reasons for His Confession

(1) for I am a man of unclean lips

- In the presence of angels – who declare God’s glory – Isaiah’s lips were unclean, incapable of representing God’s glory; inadequate & a blight
- *Unclean* –
 - *Tame* (taw-may’) “unclean” – to be unrighteous – dirty in a spiritual sense – polluted and unusable
 - This term is used to denote every type of thing that Israel was told to abhor and absolutely not defile themselves with; such as:
 - Abominable animals Israel was not allowed to eat (i.e. pigs)
 - An adulterous person
 - A corpse
 - Interestingly, *Tame* is the cry of the leper
 - “unclean” “unclean” was required of a leper to notify others of his presence that they may not become contaminated
 - **Leviticus 13:45 (ESV)**
⁴⁵ “The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ (*tame*)

- More interestingly is the setting:
 - “*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up...*”
 - Uzziah (as noted last week) had been judged for his haughty attitude before the Lord
 - He went into the holy place to offer before God (although he was not a priest)
 - God struck him with leprosy
 - He then had to declare himself “unclean, unclean” the rest of his days
 - Here, Isaiah stands before the Lord in *his heavenly temple* and declares *himself* “unclean”

(2) “and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”

- Isaiah equates himself with Israelites as a whole: “people of unclean lips” just as he has unclean lips
 - The first 5 chapters had brought this revelation concerning the people
 - Here, however, Isaiah reckons himself among them – making himself no better
 - “we are all” of unclean lips

(3) “for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

The third reason Isaiah thought he would be killed is that *he saw the LORD of hosts* – and knew that no man could see God and live.

- Isaiah saw the pre-incarnate Christ, as John 12 noted last week
- But, all he knew was that he was seeing Jehovah –
 - He must fully have expected to die at that moment
 - He knew Moses’ testimony
 - **Exodus 33:20 (ESV)**
²⁰ *But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”*
 - Likewise, Manoah and his wife (Samson’s parents) saw “the angel of the Lord” and feared they would die
 - **Judges 13:21 (ESV)**
²¹ *The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.*
 - It was common knowledge from the time of Moses that no man could see God (in his full glory – or see his face) and live, though there were numerous theophanies involving the pre-incarnate Christ and/or angels.

The long and short of it:

- Isaiah knew he was sinful – of a sinful people – and that he was in the presence of absolute holiness.
 - Thus, he cried out his demise; fearing his death would follow
 - He knew that he could not bear being in this place as he was

His Purification

Isaiah 6:6-7 (ESV)

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.”

burning coal... from the altar:

- the altar was the altar *in Heaven* – not the altar in the earthly Temple.
- However, the earthly temple, according to Hebrews 8 & 9, is a copy of the Temple in Heaven (existing as of now)
- This burning coal would have been from the fire pit that consumed offerings on the altar; the place where sacrifices were placed to be burned

“Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

- “touched your lips”
 - Isaiah specifically noted being of unclean lips – both he and the people
 - The angel makes application to that immediate confession; touching and cleansing his lips; that he may be atoned for his unclean lips
- “your guilt is taken away”
 - This phrase parallels “your sin is atoned for” – both have the same meaning expressed in different terms
 - “guilt” – Heb. *awon* (aw-vone’) – lit. “wickedness” or “iniquity” – a parallel with sin – the term notes the characteristic of sinfulness – (not necessarily a specific act – just that nature of “being” sinful)
 - “Guilt” in ESV and NIV – would reference the guilt “of sin” (really not as literal of a translation as I would like here from either of them)
 - KJV, NASB, ASV “iniquity”
 - “taken away” – Heb. *sur* (soor) – lit. “turn off” - means to put aside – put away – depart from
- “your sin atoned for”
 - “sin” – *chattaah* (khat-taw-ah’) – a common term for “sin” – refers to *the offense of sin*, or *the action of sin* rather than the mere generality of it (like *awon*)
 - “atoned” – *kapar* (kaw-far’) – the go-to OT term for “atonement” – means at its root “to cover” or “to pardon”
- OT “atonement”
 - OT atonement does not have the same end as NT atonement
 - OT atonement is a “covering, hiding away, putting aside” approach to sin – to be permanently dealt with later (at the cross)
 - NT atonement refers to a washing, cleansing, and permanent reconciliation: **sin is removed and the sinner “reconciled to God” permanently**
 - Isaiah’s atonement here is tantamount to a hall pass: his sins are covered, but he is not cleansed in the sense that he will be once Christ’s blood is applied to his account at Calvary
- Restated:

- “your [general state of sinfulness] is [set aside]”
- “your [specific sinful acts] are [covered from God’s sight]”

Thus, Isaiah’s sin is not to count against him; he is covered by the same grace that we are – as if a check had been written (that would be cashed later in Christ)

As Heb. 10 notes, the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin. Only the death of Christ can do that. But, Isaiah receives atonement as it was granted to the OT saints in that moment – that he may remain in the presence of, hear from, and respond to the LORD to receive his commission as a prophet.

Isaiah’s Commissioning

Isaiah 6:8 (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 am I! Send me.”*

⁸ *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying*

- Interestingly: God had not spoken until after Isaiah’s cleansing.
 - An angel spoke
 - An angel reacted with Isaiah
 - God was heard saying nothing
 - It’s possible he had simply said nothing up to that point
 - It’s also possible that Isaiah’s discourse could only follow his cleansing
- This was “the voice of the Lord”
 - Voice – *qol* (kol) – refers more to the sound of his voice than the message – it is the sound of one’s voice calling
 - Again, it’s possible that the emphasis indicates Isaiah’s not having heard the Lord prior to this moment – prior to his cleansing

God’s Question:

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

- Redundancy: “who shall I send” is equated with “who will go for us”
 - He is not asking two questions, but one question in two ways
 - He whom shall be sent is he who will go for us
 - The answer of the call is implicit by God’s determination of who to send
- The action terms:
 - “send” *shalah* (shaw-lakh’) – “send” “send out” or otherwise commission one “to go out” – a term indicating an issuing of the “sending” by another – a “sender”
 - this term noting *God’s commissioning* – his intentional assignment of the task to a qualified and called individual

- “go” (for us) – *halak* (haw-lak’) – “go” “walk” “behave” --- this term indicates movement to or toward something. Lit. “to walk” is the normal literal usage for mankind. In this case, fig. “go” where the Lord has called.
 - This “going” is the flip side of God’s “sending”
 - “send” – as noted – refers to God’s commissioning – his calling – an assignment given by God
 - “go” refers to an anticipated receiving of that assignment – it is *the response* to having been sent
- Together: “whom shall I send, and who will go for us”
 - Indicates God’s call *and* man’s potential response to that call
 - It demonstrates God’s assignment *and* man’s cooperation and acceptance of such assignment
 - Obviously, such a question is rhetorical.
 - God – who knows everything – doesn’t just “happen” to ask the question at the exact moment of Isaiah’s cleansing *in Heaven*. This has clearly been all orchestrated of the Lord himself. He knows the answer to the question.
 - Rather, the questions *is* the call being expressed so that Isaiah may act upon it and answer.
- The identifying pronouns of God:
 - “Whom shall I send”
 - “I” is the singular pronoun in the Hebrew. It is not inferred in translation, but stated out as a singular “I” for the Lord here
 - “who will go for us”
 - “us” is likewise a plural pronoun in the Hebrew.
 - “I” and “us” – this is one of numerous references to God where his unity and plurality are both demonstrated in a singular text
 - God is revealing his triune nature

Isaiah’s Response

Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

This is only four Hebrew words: “(I) said” “here I am” “send” “me”

- “**then I said**” is *amar* (aw-mar’) – the same term used of God “I heard the voice of the Lord *saying (amar)*” – it means simply to talk; “said” “speak” “answer(ed)” “command”
- “here I am” is one Heb term, *hinneh* (hin-nay’) – the root of which is simply, “behold” – this is a term of submission and absolute devotion;
 - an unquestioning commitment is expressed by this term in scripture when God calls, and a servant answers *hinneh*
 - **Genesis 22:1 (ESV)**
¹After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” (*hinneh*)
 - **Genesis 31:11 (ESV)**
¹¹Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’ (*hinneh*)

- **Exodus 3:4 (ESV)**
⁴ *When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” (hinneh)*
- Isaiah aligns himself with these other men of God in his unreserved “here I am”
 - This is before he even knows what – or to whom – or where God will send him... he affirms his willingness to do whatever, wherever the Lord wills

The Nature of the Call

Isaiah 6:9-10 (ESV)

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.”*

The Message

⁹ *And he said, “Go, and say to this people:*

- Clearly, this is a call to a prophetic office
 - Isaiah is not receiving knowledge for his own understanding, or writings
 - He is receiving a prophecy for the people to hear
- “this people” – uniquely for Israel
 - This message is not for everyone – it is for Israel uniquely
 - Although Judah is the immediate recipient, Isaiah is a prophet of God to Israel as a whole
 - “this people” is used throughout God’s call on Israel to distinguish her from the other peoples of the earth – to whom he did not have the same covenant relationship with
 - **Exodus 3:21 (ESV) [preparing to leave Egypt]**
²¹ *And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty,*
 - **Numbers 14:15-16 (ESV)**
¹⁵ *Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, ¹⁶ ‘It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.’*
 - “this people” is rarely used of other nations also – but again, in an attempt to draw a distinction of one people from another

‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand;

- A great irony: almost as a curse
 - “keep hearing” – *shama* (shaw-mah’) – “to hear” – more specifically, “to hear intelligently” “to hear with attention”
 - This term designates full cognition of the terms being uttered
 - While they will not understand – it is not that the terms themselves are not heard and understood in the sense that the language is clear
 - “do not understand” – lit. “never understanding” –

- “understand” *bene* (bene) – “to separate mentally” “distinguish” “have understanding”
 - Actually – only a slightly different concept than “hearing” in the Heb.
 - This has to do not with the words themselves, however, but the message the words make out.
- Thus:
 - They hear the words
 - But do not understand the message the words make (though they will think they do... as history will reveal)

keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’

- “seeing” – *ra’a* (raw-aw’) – to look and rightly observe - to have sight – literally visualize that which exists
 - Again, designating an intelligent distinguishing of the material
- “perceive” – *yada*’ (yaw-dah’) “to know” – “perceive” “discern”
 - This term indicates proper ascertaining of a subject – to understand *that which is seen*

Both Phrases:

- Tantamount to our phrase, “you can’t see the forest for the trees”
 - The picture is that something is actually seen – or heard
 - But not understood for what it truly is

The End Result:

- Isaiah is being told – *up front* – that the people would be incapable of truly understanding his message: he would be speaking to an illiterate bunch. He was to not expect “success” in his ministry as we today think of it.
 - From the viewpoint of man: Isaiah would be an utter failure. No one he preached to would ever understand him
 - From God’s viewpoint: Isaiah would be a success; for he would have been faithful to do what he was told – and God’s purposes would be accomplished
 - Also, one might notice that *later generations would* understand

The Meaning

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull,

- “heart” in the same sense we use it figuratively: the seat of the intellect, will, emotion, etc. Some translations use “minds” here – properly so
- “dull” – *shamen* (shaw-man’) lit. “to fatten”
 - This speaks of an insensitive, unresponsive “fat” heart that is out of sorts

and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes;

- “heavy” – *kabed* (kaw-bad’) – to “make heavy” in a bad sense – a burdensome, dull, senseless quality

- In the sense of an ear – it would figuratively mean “to deafen” as noted in some translations
 - HCSB “deafen their ears” – less literal, but more accurate in this case

lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

- Make no mistake: *It is God’s declaration that Judah (and Israel as a whole) would NOT understand – and would NOT perceive – they will NOT GET IT*
- *Else:*
 - THEY MIGHT TURN AND BE HEALED
- God has declared that they will not be allowed to repent this time.
 - Seems harsh – seems uncharacteristic
 - But, don’t forget the history:
 - Israel has *always* turned away from God
 - She has *always* been prone to discipline – then repent – only to turn right back again to her sin, idolatry, lust for the world of other nations
- God has had enough.
 - Judgment was coming – and she would be utterly incapable of turning from it in repentance.
 - This is a “last straw” moment.

The Outcome of the Call

Isaiah 6:11-13 (ESV)

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.

The Question:

- The question: “How long, O Lord?”
 - Points back to the command, “Go and say to this people...”
 - Isaiah is to preach until the judgment he is to preach about occurs
 - Isaiah did not live that long – but his call was to preach continually – even though it was to a people who would hear but not understand, see but not perceive.

The Answer: Judgment Foretold

Destruction & Desolation

“Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste”

- Desolation was the ultimate punishment (other than being utterly destroyed like Sodom & Gomorrah) a people could receive by God and still tell about it

- In the case of Israel, desolation was always (and will be always) followed by restoration
 - “the year King Uzziah died” was 739
 - The Babylonian invasion/capture:
 - Nebuchadnezzar took royalty captives in 605 BC (Daniel)
 - He returned in 597 BC in response to a rebellion – took 10,000 captives and subjected Jerusalem to Babylonian control
 - Ezekiel was taken in this deportation
 - Temple ransacked – treasures of the Temple and the King were taken
 - Nebuchadnezzar returned yet again in 588 BC –
 - Conducted a long (18 month) siege against Jerusalem
 - Wall were breached
 - City destroyed
 - Temple burned in 586 - & abandoned
 - The ark of the covenant was never again seen
- The warning here was
 - *cities lie waste*
 - after three separate attacks & pillaging – the cities were destroyed overall
 - *without inhabitant*
 - only the poorest of the land remained after Nebuchadnezzar’s third assault
 - **2 Kings 25:8-12 (ESV)**
⁸*In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹And he burned the house of the LORD and the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. ¹⁰And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile. ¹²But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.*
- *houses without people*
 - the largest houses were burned – but clearly many other smaller homes remained – yet without people to inhabit them
 - the field workers who were left to maintain the farms would have likely had homes on the premises where they worked
- *the land is a desolate waste*
 - desolation – used numerous times to refer to lands left behind after God’s judgment
 - Even at the time of Cyrus – only 40,000 returned at that time to rebuild the temple and the city

Exile

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

- “removes people far away”
 - This certainly is fitting for the carrying off of the people to Babylon (Iraq) where they resettled
 - They remained there some 50 years until they were allowed to return (by Cyrus, after overthrowing the Babylonians and establishing the Medo-Persian Empire)
 - **2 Chronicles 36:22-23 (ESV)**
²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²³ “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’ ”
 - Identical to Ezra 1
- “forsaken places are many in the midst of the land”
 - Picture of more places abandoned than kept up

The “After” Prophecy

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.

Completing the entirety of the judgment, there remains a sinister future-looking prophecy to boot:

- The current situation ends with “a tenth remain in it” – referring to Judah-
 - 9/10^{ths} of the people are in exile and gone
 - 1/10th remain to care for the land until the return of the nation
- However, it notes “it will be burned again”
 - The nation is told that this is *not the final word* on the subject: a future destruction remains
 - “**again**” indicates that a similarity must exist between that which will occur immediately – and that which will occur at a later time
- “like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains”
 - As a tree is cut down- yet a small portion of stump remains, which may sprout a new tree from the same stock
 - So, there will be growth again from the stump of fallen Judah
 - Ironically, chapter 11 will note “the stump” of Jesse – indicating the closure of David’s kingdom – yet a future restoration of it’s very lineage (Christ)
 - **Isaiah 11:1 (ESV)**
¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
 - This terminology speaks of a rebirth of the people from seeming destruction

- “the holy seed is its stump”
 - “holy seed” refers to the “seed” by which Messiah will come
 - It is the pure seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc--- a “seed” of the lineage of Judah
 - “holy” – *qodesh* (ko’-desh) – “holy” – hallowed – holiness – consecrated (that which is set apart for God)
 - In this case, the lineage of the people of Israel is “holy” and set apart as God’s chosen people & lineage of Messiah
 - “seed” – *zera* (zeh’-rah) – “seed” “offspring” – literally, a seed of a plant – figuratively, “offspring”
 - This is the term in Gen 3:15 “I will put enmity between ... your offspring (or seed – *zera*) and hers”
 - Used in Gen 26 of Abraham – “I will bless you and multiply your offspring (*zera* – “seed”)”
 - This same term is noted after the return from exile:
 - ***Ezra 9:2 (ESV)***
² *For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.*”
 - Here, it is noted that during the time of the exile some of the people had not kept their bloodline pure – as God had commanded in the law of Moses
 - “holy race” is
 - The seed of the promised people
 - The seed of Messiah
 - The “stump” which will regrow – and be burned once again – refers to the offspring of Israel –
 - The bloodline of the promises of God
 - The bloodline of Messiah
 - The “holy” (or “set apart”) seed

Jesus’ Comments Concerning the “After” Prophecy

Matthew 13:10-15 (ESV)

¹⁰ Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” ¹¹ And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ¹⁵ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’”

Matthew 23:37-39 (ESV)

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' ”

- Jesus notes:
 - HIS (first century) generation of Israelites were those to whom Isaiah 6 would be fulfilled
 - ¹⁴ *Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ¹⁵ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’*
 - Upon completion of his ministry (Mat 23) he notes the pending desolation of the temple –
 - In the following discourse with the disciples (Mat 24) he articulates further
 - The future destruction of the Temple
 - The desolation of the land
 - The abomination of desolation discussed by Daniel
 - Who was IN the Babylonian desolation *when he wrote it*
 - Thus, he was certainly understanding of a future regrowth of “the stump” of “holy seed” and the impending desolation once again of the nation
 - **Isaiah 6:13 (ESV)**
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.*

Isaiah 6, then, must be understood as a dual reference:

- There is a message for Isaiah’s day
- There is a message for a future generation
- The message is the same:
 - You will hear but not understand
 - You will see but not perceive
 - Your heart will be made dull – lest you turn and repent
 - You will thus be judged by:
 - Cities lying in waste
 - Houses without people
 - Exile
 - While the holy seed is preserved throughout it all

(fulfilled – 70 AD)

Chapter 2: The Mountain of the Lord

Isaiah 2:1-4 (ESV)

¹ The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

The Timing

² It shall come to pass in the latter days

- “in the latter days” – (it shall come to pass is assumed – the Hebrew only states “in the latter days”
 - “latter” – Heb. *aharit* (akh-ar-eeth’) lit. “end” “last”
 - Latter does not mean “at some point later than now”
 - It means “in the last days” overall
 - The question then become “last” of what?
 - “days” – Heb. *yom* – “day” (2008 times) – literally refers to the daytime as opposed to the night (but refers to a 24 hour period as well) – but also can refer to *any period of time* depending on the context
 - *Yom kippur* – the day of atonement – a literal 24 hour day
 - It can also mean “year” or “season” or “period of time” depending on context
 - Gen 2:4 “these are the generations of the heavens and earth...in the day (*yom*) when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.”
 - Referring to 7 days as “the day”
 - Here *yom* is used in the plural
 - When used in the plural, *yom* takes a figurative non-standard meaning – a “space of time”
 - i.e. grandfather telling grandchildren: “back in my days...”
- Thus: “in the latter days” means “in the last times” – most specifically relating to years
 - This is an eschatological text – speaking about “the latter times”
 - Typically, Jewish eschatology speaks in terms of “ages”
 - **Matthew 24:3 (ESV)**
³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”
 - **Matthew 13:39 (ESV)**
³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels.

- **Matthew 12:32 (ESV)**
³² *And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*
- **Luke 18:29-30 (NIV)**
²⁹ *"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God*
³⁰ *will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."*
- “*aharit yom*” refers generally to “the final age” or “the last years”
 - This text, compared to other “last age” texts all meet muster as this being a messianic kingdom text

The Scenario

the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills;

- “mountain” – Mt. Moriah – where the temple was built
 - Jerusalem is an elevated city above the surrounding landscape
 - Moriah is the utmost elevated position within the city; the location of the Temple (called “Temple Mount”)
- “house of the LORD” – always refers to the Temple (or tabernacle) in OT
 - In the “latter days” – the temple will be once again built to the specifications of the never-built temple of Ezekiel 40-43
- “highest of the mountains and lifted up above the hills”
 - It is *the mountain* of the house of the Lord that is established higher than all other mountains
 - This has two possible meanings:
 - “higher” could refer to the elevation of the mountain. In that case, it may refer to the physical structure of the mountain to literally be raised higher into the air than all other mountains on earth
 - “higher” may refer to the authority of the mountain being the highest in the earth. In this usage, “higher” refers to the power the mountain of the house of the Lord represents.
 - This is the clearest explanation in the context:
 - The mountain of the Lords house is elevated politically – such that:
 - V2 “all the nations flow to it”
 - V3 “out of Zion shall go the law”
 - V4 “He shall judge between the nations” –etc

The Extent of Rule

all the nations shall flow to it,

- This line affirms the “authority” interpretation for the establishment of the Lord’s mountain as “higher” than all other mountains

- The term “nation” here (*goy*) is used of governmental affinities, people groups, and “nations” in general
- River – Heb. *nahar* (naw-har’) a verb made out of a noun: *nahar* means “river”
 - Lit. “the nations shall ‘river’ from it”
 - The clear point is that the power of the mountain of the Lord will be the source of the power for all other nations
 - This fits the context perfectly:
 - All governmental authority will come from the Lord’s mountain – and the house of the Lord, as he governs from the Temple mount
 - All nations will receive their marching orders directly from Him
 - He will be the King of the earth

³ *and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”*

- “peoples” is a different term than “nation” above
 - Generally, determining a smaller section of conglomerated people
 - A tribe
 - A family
 - A people group (irrespective of national affinity)
- “let us go up to the mountain” “to the house”
 - People are willingly – intentionally – making pilgrimages to Jerusalem – to Moriah, the Mount of the Lord
- “that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths”
 - At this point in time (we learn from numerous other scriptures) there is a spiritual renewal on the earth
 - The reprobate are not allowed into the kingdom (Mat 25)
 - The Kingdom begins with only believers
 - Their heart is to learn the ways of the King

The Source of Rule

For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

- This is a re-statement of what was already established:
 - “Zion” – specifically, the second highest peak in Jerusalem (next to Moriah)
 - Figuratively – “Jerusalem” in general
 - **Psalm 87:2 (ESV)**
² *the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.*
 - **Joel 2:1 (ESV)**
¹ *Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,*
 - **Psalm 51:18 (ESV)**
¹⁸ *Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;*
 - Thus, “the law” will come from Jerusalem – where the King will dwell
- Note the parallel:

- “out of Zion shall go the law” – parallels with – “the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”
 - Zion is equated with Jerusalem
 - “word of the Lord” is equated with “law”
- This refers to a restoration of a true theocracy:
 - God himself is the King
 - God himself is the law maker
 - The “word of the Lord” is equated with the “law” of the land
 - This is precisely how Israel was initially established: a theocracy, who served the written law of God.
 - At this time, the entire world will have its law streamed out of Jerusalem

⁴ *He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples;*

- Judge – Heb. *shapat* (shaw-fat’) – “to judge” in a governing motif – lit. “to settle disputes” “to determine innocence or guilt” “to litigate”
 - There is no separate judicial system – the Lord is both lawgiver – and judge as to the upholding of that law to the nations
- Again, a parallel is used:
 - “judge between the nations” – vs – “decide disputes for many peoples”
 - This parallel indicates a scope of such judgment:
 - “Nations” –vs- “peoples” - indicate the large and the smaller people groups (same two terms used in v2-3)
 - “Judge” –vs – “decide disputes” –
 - “judge” (as noted above) is the legal, governmental settling of the law
 - “decide disputes” – Heb. *yakah* (yaw-kahh’) – lit. “reprove” “rebuke” “correct”
 - Taking a personal initiative in the discipline of the behaviors – beyond mere judgment of an action into a right or wrong category

The Results

Weapons of War Eliminated

they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;

another parallel:

- “swords into plowshares” –vs- “spears into pruning hooks”
 - Swords & spears are weapons of war, obviously – both designed to harm, kill, defend an attacker or attack
 - Plowshares and pruning hooks are farm implements – used to cultivate, feed, nurture
- The art of war has been replaced with the art of horticulture

- This is the polar opposite of Joel’s prophecy concerning the attitude of human governments *prior to* the establishment of the Lord as the King
 - **Joel 3:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ *Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am a warrior.”*
 - At this time (Joel’s reference) men are being instigated of the Lord for the great judgment against the nations – whereby the Lord will fight against them and destroy them before the establishment of the Kingdom

National Conflict Eliminated

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

- “nation shall not lift up sword against nation” a foregone conclusion for several reasons
 - First: disputes are now settled directly by the Lord
 - Second: they have no spears
 - Third: they are no longer learning the art of war

Other Thoughts:

- This is clearly a supernaturally induced scenario
 - It is not made up merely of man’s good intentions
 - The spirit of rebellion is clearly quelled by the Lord’s presence (and Satan’s absence- as other texts reveal)
- This is clearly a prophecy about “earth” in the latter days
 - Not Heaven
- This is clearly a unified theocracy being depicted
 - It’s not something uniquely about the church or Israel- but the whole earth – all governments – all people groups – unified under the Lord as King
- This text is virtually mirrored in Micah

Micah 4:1-3 (ESV)

¹ *It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, ² and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³ He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;*

The Righteous Branch

Isaiah 11:1-10 (ESV)

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

His Lineage

Isaiah 11:1 (ESV)

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

His Nature

Isaiah 11:2-3 (ESV)

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD....

His Actions

Isaiah 11:3-5 (ESV)

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Nature of His Reign

Isaiah 11:6-10 (ESV)

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Harmony in Nature

- ⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb
- the leopard shall lie down with the young goat
- the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together
- The cow and the bear shall graze
- their young shall lie down together

Harmony with Man

- a little child shall lead them
- The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra
- the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

Herbivorous State

- The cow and the bear shall graze
- the lion shall eat straw like the ox

Knowledge of the Lord

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain
- for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea

Reign of the Branch

In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Chapter 13: Destruction of Babylon

The Lord's Army

Isaiah 13:1-5 (ESV)

¹ The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw. ² On a bare hill raise a signal; cry aloud to them; wave the hand for them to enter the gates of the nobles. ³ I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger, my proudly exulting ones. ⁴ The sound of a tumult is on the mountains as of a great multitude! The sound of an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together! The LORD of hosts is mustering a host for battle. ⁵ They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, the LORD and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

The Target

Isaiah 13:1 (ESV)

¹ The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

Babylon – as a literal historical nation – would be destroyed about 140 years after Isaiah's prophetic term; in 539, falling to Cyrus (Medo-Persians)

We will see that there is also a future reference to Babylon as a symbolic reference to Satan's kingdom on earth in the latter days

The Call: Signal an Army

Isaiah 13:2 (ESV)

² On a bare hill raise a signal; cry aloud to them; wave the hand for them to enter the gates of the nobles.

- “bare hill” – used as a clean, high spot from which to signal to an awaiting army – perhaps a lookout would wait from a distant separate bare hill
- “raise a signal” – lit. “raise a banner” – *nes* (nace) – “standard” “ensignia” “flag (raised on a pole)”
- “wave the hand” – either a hand wave, or the waving hand which waved the flag, or banner, of the signal
- The raising of the banner and signaling of the waved hand – together instigate a command that can be seen by a great army
- “enter the gates of the nobles”
 - The picture is that people are in place to ransack the protected places of the city
 - A banner is lifted, signifying that the time of attack has arrived
 - And the attack would next ensue

Note: when Cyrus invaded historical Babylon, he did so by timing an assault through the gates of the rivers themselves.

The Euphrates ran through the city – and through its dual 300+ foot walls. The walls had gates protruding downward, through the river.

Cyrus diverted the river upstream, lowering the levels, that he could attack the city under the walls – rather than over them – during the night.

Isaiah 44:27-28 (ESV)

²⁷who says to the deep, ‘Be dry; I will dry up your rivers’; ²⁸who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’...

The Provision: God’s Sovereignty

Isaiah 13:3 (ESV)

³I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger, my proudly exulting ones.

- “I myself have commanded”
 - Clearly, this is God’s motion – his decision – his battle
 - It is not the result of random historical unfoldings, etc
- “my consecrated ones”
 - “consecrated” – *qadash* (kaw-dash’) – “sanctified” “dedicate” “holy”
 - This (and a few variants) is the term for “holy”
 - An ironic term to use of Cyrus – a pagan
- “summoned my mighty men”
 - “mighty men” – *gibbor* (ghib-bore’) – “warriors” “champions” “soldiers”
- In both cases:
 - “my” mighty men – and “my” consecrated ones
 - This language – *God’s consecrated warriors* has an angelic ring to it – sounding as if more than a human army is referenced, perhaps
- “to execute my anger”
 - Again, this is clearly God’s own campaign against those whom his anger burns

The Action: A Great Battle

Isaiah 13:4 (ESV)

⁴The sound of a tumult is on the mountains as of a great multitude! The sound of an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together! The LORD of hosts is mustering a host for battle.

- “sound of a tumult”
 - Lit. “sound of a great multitude”
 - The Medes and Persians formed an alliance to destroy Babylon - representative of a great people group
- “on the mountains”
 - The attackers clearly have some mountainous terrain that they travers on their path to Babylon

- “uproar of kingdoms”
 - Or “uproar among the kingdoms”
 - A coalition is formed by two great groups for the purpose of eliminating Babylon – at God’s own direction
- “LORD of hosts is mustering a host for battle”
 - “LORD of hosts” – a common expression/title for God
 - The meaning of this: frequently referring to angels
 - **1 Kings 22:19 (ESV)**
¹⁹ And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left;
 - **Daniel 8:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them.
 - **Zephaniah 1:5 (ESV)**
⁵ those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom,
 - Yet, that does not seem to fit here
 - “mustering a host”
 - The LORD of “hosts” is mustering a “host” for battle
 - The determination of what type of “host” this is could greatly change the outcome of the full meaning of this text
 - Question:
 - Is “the LORD of hosts” synonymous with God as the LORD of the pagan lands of the Medes & Persians?

A Reiteration:

Isaiah 13:5 (ESV)

⁵They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, the LORD and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

- “they come from a distant land” – seems simple enough
- “from the end of the heavens”
 - *Shamayim* (shaw-mah’-yim) – “heavens” 1,2 or 3 – sky, outer space, or where God lives
 - Once again, a strange term for armies that marched overground from neighboring lands
- “destroy the whole land”
 - “destroy” – *habal* (khaw-bal’) – lit. bind or take – fig. destroy, corrupt
 - “destroy” is chosen because of context:
 - v6 notes another term for destruction
 - *Shod* (shode) – meaning “spoil” “destroy” “make desolate”
 - V9 notes of the desolation of the land

- V.20 notes it will never be inhabited again
- Clearly “destruction” is the term intended

Problems:

Several problems can be noted with above statements if this text is to be rendered completely as a description of the destruction of Babylon.

1. God calls “my consecrated (holy) ones” in v.3
 - a. One might normally consider this a reference to angels – rather than men
 - b. One may also note this a reference to one of the Lord’s redeemed rather than a pagan king (Cyrus)
2. Likewise: “mighty men” in v.3 sounds as if it would rather refer to angels than to the constituency of Persia
3. “the sound of a tumult...on the mountains” is also mysterious
 - a. Armies normally would not traverse mountains unless they had to. This would not be the case from any foreseeable direction (that I can think of) in entering Babylon –
4. “LORD of hosts” “mustering a host”
 - a. The use of *saba* (hosts) in the title “LORD of hosts” AND in the same sentence with “mustering a host”
 - i. Sounds like the LORD raising an angel army rather than a human one
5. “they come from...the ends of the heavens” in v5
 - a. Could be purely figurative
 - b. Or- could refer to a larger use of the term *shamayim* – that is; the heavenly places themselves (skies, space, etc)
6. “destroy the whole land” in v.5
 - a. Doesn’t fit historical Babylonian story
 - i. The Persians did not destroy literally the city
 - ii. The city endured until the time of Alexander the Great
7. There is MUCH MORE in this chapter that causes one to re-evaluate whether this is a literal destruction of Babylon – figurative – or if perhaps this refers to dual reference: That the text is *partially* fulfilled in the near vision, but is *fully* fulfilled at a later time
 - a. The land is made desolate in v.9 – but that didn’t happen at the time of Cyrus
 - b. In v 10 stars did not shine, the sun was dark, the moon did not shine
 - i. This has no historical reference whatsoever as of this time
 - c. V11 notes, “I will punish the world” – in the text that seems to be pointed uniquely at Babylon
 - d. V13 – the “earth will be shaken out of its place”
 - i. Again, no historical note of this ever happening
 - e. A “day of the Lord” reference in v.6 and 9

By the end of the chapter, it is clear that:

1. “Babylon” refers to something bigger than *just* the 6th century kingdom BC
2. The attackers are more than *just* the armies of Cyrus in the 6th century BC

The Nature of This Event

It is a “Day of the Lord” Event

Isaiah 13:6 (ESV)

⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

day of the LORD

- “**day of the Lord**” always refers to God’s divine judgment
 - This term has an eschatological application – even in terms when there is a local fulfillment, there is also an eschatological fulfillment
 - This is a good example of such a place:
 - Indeed, Babylon *would be destroyed* by God’s chosen army – that of Cyrus and the Persians, about 140 years after the prophecy
 - However, *also*, there is an eschatological reference in the text concerning a “Day of the Lord”
 - “day of the Lord” passages include:
 - Eternality of destruction
 - (the last portion of the chapter focuses on the eternal nature of Babylon’s destruction)
 - In this destruction, the land is *physically laid bare* – not just the kingdom, but the real estate
 - **Isaiah 13:20 (ESV)**
²⁰ It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there.
 - Angelic intervention
 - The judgments of the day of the Lord have angelic influence. Revelation spells this out in detail, while many other DotL passages make references. (Angels are in charge of the judgments of the tribulation in Revelation)
 - Upheavals in nature
 - Typically: earthquakes, eclipses of the sun, moon and stars, drought, etc.
 - These types of things are noted in this destruction of Babylon:
 - **Isaiah 13:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.
 - **Isaiah 13:13 (ESV)**
¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.
 - Thus: it must be understood that this destruction of Babylon, being a “day of the Lord” passage, including DotL influences, speaks of more than just

a 6th century BC event – it speaks also of Babylon’s particular fate in a future event related to world-wide destruction.

“as destruction from the Almighty”

- “destruction” – Heb. *shod* (shode) – “spoil” “destruction” “desolation” – a term indicating violence to be waged against, with an utterly spoiled condition as a result.
- “Almighty” – Heb. *shadday* [or “Shaddai” as written commonly] (sha-dah’ee)
 - A proper name of God. One of a series of names used with the *el* designation
 - *El* means “God” and the second term would define one of God’s attributes
 - *El olam* – “God of eternity”
 - *El elyon* – “God most high”
 - *El shaddai* – “God Almighty”
 - This term highlights God’s omnipotence:
 - He is over all kingdoms
 - He is certainly all-powerful over Babylon; in spite of Babylon’s thoughts on the subject
- The phrase: *shod (min) shaddai* “destruction (from) the Almighty”
 - Has a poetic ring
 - *Shod* and *shaddai* having a similar sound
 - Used precisely in that manner in Joel. (in fact, it is nearly the exact sentence)
 - **Joel 1:15 (ESV)**
 - ¹⁵ Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.
 - “alas” – *ahah* (a-haw’) an expression of pain (like ouch or ohhh!) translated “ah” in the sense of a groan or “woe” in the sense of the nature of that groan
 - Isaiah 13:6 begins
 - “wail” – *yalal* (yaw-lal’) a term meaning “to howl” – as if crying out
 - This phrase indicates the hand of God being exercised in power

The Human Response to this Day

Isaiah 13:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. ⁸ They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.

“therefore”

- Because the day of the Lord is near
- Because it will come “as destruction from the Almighty”

They are Frozen with Fear

all hands will be feeble

- *Rapa* is what all hands will be:
 - *Rapa* (raw-faw') "feeble" "weakened" "faint" "slacken"
 - This term refers to the ceasing of a presumed action
 - The picture is that people's fear will cause them to literally not be able to respond with their hands
 - People will bumble about – incapable of response

every human heart will melt.

- Heart used fig. as the center of human consciousness, psyche & intellect
- "melting" hearts are used in scripture to speak of inconceivable fear
 - (of Absalom's men) **2 Samuel 17:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men.
 - (of the Lord's judgment of Egypt) **Isaiah 19:1 (ESV)**
¹An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.
 - (of Israel under God's judgment) **Ezekiel 21:7 (ESV)**
⁷And when they say to you, 'Why do you groan?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that it is coming. Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled,' " declares the Lord GOD.

They are consumed with fear

⁸ They will be dismayed:

- "dismayed" – Heb. *baw-hal'* – "troubled" "afraid" – but from a very excessive position
 - Root term means *to palpitate – tremble inwardly.*
 - This refers to an exceptional level of fear

pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor.

- "pangs" – Heb. *sir* (tseer) – used of severe mental anguish – grabbing as a pang of birth to a pregnant woman
 - Term is also used of a hinge (such as a door hinge)
 - The picture is perhaps of one sitting upright in pain – like a hinge bends to a 90 degree position – an involuntary spasm – in this case – due to fear
- "agony" – *hebel* (kheh'-bel) – agony emotionally, not physically – refers to "sorrow" "distress" – root means "twisted" (as a rope) – here applied to the anguish of soul

They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.

Their faces *tamah lahab*

- *Tamah* (taw-mah') – marvel – amazed - astonished

- *Lahab* (lah'hab) – flame – gleaming – polished – brilliant

They will have an astonished look on each face – they will be utterly astonished at what they see
- they wouldn't have believed it