

THE MINISTRY OF ISAIAH

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 08 December 2024
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

What I thought I might do today is consolidate a little and continue from last week, particularly looking at the ministry of Isaiah. We are contrasting Isaiah's ministry with Lot's ministry. There were two distinct phases for Isaiah because his prophetic ministry began during the reign of King Uzziah. We will comment briefly on King Uzziah this morning if we have time. Isaiah's ministry (the first phase of his ministry) began during the reign of King Uzziah, and then in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord.

We need to connect that with the experience of Peter, for this is where Isaiah did meet the Lord eye to eye and heart to heart. He was confronted by the eyes of His glory. That is the way Isaiah describes it — 'the eyes of His glory'. Then from there he was commissioned a second time to minister in the spirit and power of Elijah. From there his word was a polarising word for the nation.

Isaiah was a preacher of righteousness in a nation that had become like Sodom and Gomorrah. As I said, Isaiah was not like Lot. He was not confused in relation to his own sanctification, but he was ministering to a nation that had become like Sodom and Gomorrah in terms of its culture. Isaiah speaks to them. This is Isaiah 1 verse 10. 'Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom.' He is describing the rulers of the nation as the rulers of Sodom. 'Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.'

The leaders of the nation were evidently promoting an unclean and unsanctified culture, even though it was a very religious nation, and they were adhering to the exactness of the Lord's commandments in many respects. Nonetheless, the leaders were promoting an unclean and unsanctified culture and the people then, like Gomorrah, were embracing that. Now we could compare

this to the Corinthians, which we will not do today. This would be our New Testament equivalent in many respects, where Paul is talking to them and saying that 'you have been deceived'. He was concerned that they would be deceived by false messengers preaching another Jesus and promoting another gospel. He is saying to them, 'You are so religiously sophisticated, so puffed up, that you are embracing all of this, and you are bearing it beautifully, and it is an unsanctified, unclean culture.'

The word of righteousness that was proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah was enough to invoke the fire of God (this is in the early phase of his ministry) upon the nation so that it would become a smoking furnace like Sodom and Gomorrah. It was already like Sodom and Gomorrah in terms of its culture, but the word proclaimed by Isaiah then, as a preacher of righteousness, was enough to invoke the judgement of God upon the entire nation. That would all become a smoking furnace except for the fact that there was a small remnant there; and the small remnant was preserving the nation.

If we go to the verse before (verse 9), it says, 'Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.' We do not know how small that remnant was. We know that much earlier Elijah had seven thousand which he was not aware of. But that was the size of the remnant in the northern kingdom - seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the prophet Baal. Abraham prayed for Sodom. We will not use the term 'negotiating' but he is interceding with the Lord. 'What if there are fifty people found there who are righteous? Will you destroy the city?' The Lord says, 'No, I will preserve it for the sake of fifty.' He gets it down to ten - which is an interesting number, isn't it? ten was not one family. But

if there were two or three families 'in the name', meeting in the name, a faithful remnant, even two or three families, He would have preserved the whole city. Now, of course there was not. There was only Lot; so, He pulls him out. But that does not mean that Lot was saved, as we considered last week. He still needed to choose. Lot did not have a worthy house.

We do not know how many believers comprised the very small remnant in the southern tribes of Judah during the ministry of Isaiah. But we do know what it is likened to. We will go to the verse before, just working backwards. Verse 8, 'The daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.' Now I do not want to get distracted on cucumbers this morning. We will leave them to one side; but we will focus briefly here on the vineyard, because this is a major theme then in the book of Isaiah - the Lord's vineyard.

If you go to Isaiah chapter 5, Isaiah is singing a prophetic song to the Lord, and he calls the Lord 'My Well-beloved'. He is singing a prophetic song to the Lord about the Lord's vineyard. He describes it as a vineyard on a fruitful hill. He describes the way that the Lord prepared the ground and dug out all the stones and built a tower and built a winepress. He did everything that was necessary for the vineyard to bring forth good grapes. This is Isaiah 5 verse 4. This is the Lord speaking and He is saying, 'What more could have been done to My vineyard, that I have not done with it?' He did everything that was necessary for this vineyard. 'Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?'

The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts was the house of Israel, and the men of Judah were His pleasant plant, and the Lord was coming. He was looking for righteousness, but He saw only wickedness. Now again, of course, in the New Covenant, the vine is the body of Christ.

Christ is the vine; we are the branches; and we are receiving His life in the fellowship of His offering. The good grapes - the fruit of the vine is the fruit of His life in us as we are then doing the works that Christ has already done for us, by the power of His resurrection life that we are receiving in His offering. That is the good grapes. Then you have, as we have here, a whole lot of wild grapes; or worthless grapes; or a whole lot of other religious activity that is happening which is not the fruit of Christ's life. This is what Isaiah was identifying then in relation to the nation of Israel which remarkably he is describing is like Sodom and Gomorrah.

This is a very sobering point, that he is describing a religious nation like this. Then he goes on and he identifies very specifically what the wild grapes look like (or what the wickedness looks like), and he goes through, and he pronounces, 'Woe'. Woe is just a pronouncement of judgement upon the nation because of these very specific behaviours. We have not looked at it yet, but when you see Jesus, His final public sermon in the temple before He leaves is to pronounce 'Woe' upon the religious leaders of the day. There He pronounces eight statements of woe. Isaiah here identifies six.

Let us look at this very briefly. I am not going to expand these, but it is good to consider these statements. This is Isaiah 5 verse 8. It says, 'Woe to those who join house to house; they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!' The people were not maintaining the sanctification of their own house nor were they abiding. Now it is obviously some of the people. He is identifying these things. Probably different families were guilty of different things. He is saying that some of the nation are doing this. They are adding house to house and field to field. They are not maintaining the sanctification of their own house and abiding within the limit of their own field. We have considered that

previously concerning business partnerships, and all these things have some very practical application - unequally yoked and all of these things.

Isaiah 5 verse 11. This is the second woe. It says, 'Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them!' When he is talking about wine here, I do not think he is particularly talking about some of the people having a drinking culture. He is talking about the fruit of the vine here. This is the fruit of these wild grapes. They are put through a wine press, and that is not a good vintage from the good grapes. It is not the fruit of the vine in that regard. It is the wild grapes; and they are crushed, and it is producing drink. This wine is intoxicating the senses; it is distorting the spiritual senses so that the people are erring in vision and in judgement and following something. There is a drive here with this one. This is the 'woe to those who rise early in the morning'.

I do not think that this is that they are partying all day. Maybe they are - maybe they are just pursuing a lifestyle. But I think there is a drive here because there is an intoxication. They are rising early in the morning; they are staying up late at night; all in the name of chasing this projection that they have created for themselves. They have this drive. They do not recognise the need for obedience or regeneration. Isaiah 5 verse 12, 'The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord.' They have all this drive, but their focus is not what Christ has already accomplished for me, and I cannot do anything other than that. There is no point getting up early to do anything other than what Christ has already done for me. But they are not thinking that way. Drive to succeed. They do not regard the work of the Lord. There is no recognition for the need of obedience. '...nor consider the

operation of His hands'. I am just loving that little statement, 'the operation', the heart operation that the Lord is wanting to perform in each and every one of us day by day - the work of regeneration in us. That has to be our focus.

Now the third one: Isaiah 5 verse 18. 'Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as if with a cart rope; [These are interesting pictures. You can consider this. What does all of this mean? What does this look like?] ...that say, "Let Him make speed [speaking about the Lord] and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it.'" All very religious.

I think this is describing the people who will not let go of the past. They insist on pulling it with them; pulling it with cords of vanity; not letting it go; pulling it all behind them; pulling it all with them; not willing to forget, while at the same time looking forward to what the Lord will do. Because they are not letting go of the past, they are always looking forward to the future and not recognising the season of their visitation when the Lord is speaking to them today; not able to meet the Lord today and know Him today. It was really resting on me the way they were saying, 'Look, we are really looking forward to what the Lord is going to *do* in the future; and we are really looking forward to *seeing* it; and we are really looking forward to *knowing* it, when the Lord is wanting to meet them *today*, so they can see Him *today* and know Him *today*. This is true for each and every one of us. He does want fellowship with us on the journey.

The fourth one is in verse 20, 'Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!' Everything is mixed up. This is a carnal perspective on life where everything is upside down and inside out and mixed up.

There will be lots of examples of this. Such a person will often be chasing after people who have walked away from the Lord, because they have a distorted view of the love of God. Malachi talks about this. He is talking about the people and what was wearying the Lord and what He was having issue with. He says, 'It is everyone, because they are saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them."' This is a distorted view of the love of God. They do not believe in a gospel of sanctification. They believe in a gospel of niceness and there is no power for salvation in a gospel of niceness. Not that we are impolite; but the gospel of niceness does not save anybody. They do not believe in a gospel of sanctification, so they end up embracing and normalising what is under God's judgement - calling what is evil, good. Now at the same time, such a person will often have a lot of judgements about what should be happening in the church, because it is the fruit of a leaven that puffs up. That is that one.

Isaiah 5 verse 21, 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!' I think this one is pretty straightforward. This describes a self-righteous person who believes in the veracity of their own wisdom and perspective on matters. They find it very difficult to receive a word from outside of themselves.

Then verse 22: this is number six. 'Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink.' Now this is a very interesting one and you think, 'So how is this different from the second one concerning the mixing of wine?' This is woe to men mighty at drinking wine. It has almost this sense of boasting that 'This does not impact me.' It is a bit like 'I can drink coffee after whatever time, and I still sleep.' This has nothing to do with coffee here, but it has that sense of, 'Yeah, well I can do this, and this might have a big impact on others. I noticed them, they are stumbling around,

and they are drunk, and they obviously cannot hold their wine very well. But I can do this, because I am mighty at drinking wine, and I am valiant for mixing intoxicating drink.'

When we read on (I think the second one is more that drive to chase something in the world, and just completely intoxicated in that manner), ... this is more the person who is saying, 'Yeah, well I can do all of that, but I can also then judge rightly in the body of Christ. I actually have a role.' This may be describing leaders who actually are not maintaining any sanctification in their own family, but then presuming that they can lead in the church. Mighty at drinking wine. 'I can handle it all. It will be okay. I can bridge it.' We know it is talking about judges then among the Lord's people, because the next verse says, 'Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!' They do have a role, but again, they are getting that all mixed up now. They believe that the wine does not impact their judgement, but the mixed culture means that they are building with wood, hay and stubble.

It goes on very graphically then - verse 24. 'Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the Law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.' It comes back to the word here. Now the Law of the Lord of Hosts - we are not talking here about the law of the Old Covenant - we are talking about the Law of sanctification. That is the best way of considering the Law. It is the Law of sanctification. It is talking about obedience to the Holy Spirit to your sanctification.

In the end we must be obedient to the conviction of the Holy Spirit in relation to the word of Christ that has been proclaimed to us. This is the foundational issue; you have

all of these different manifestations, but it all comes back to this foundational issue which the Lord was addressing among the people and that was their obedience. Sometimes our disobedience can be covered with a very religious veneer.

The prophet Isaiah rebuked the people for their offerings (just coming back to Isaiah chapter 1), their meetings and their prayers. This is very sobering to consider that the Lord actually addressed all of these things - their offering, their meetings and then also their prayers. Concerning their offering (verse 11), he says, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or goats."

Now, as we said, this is not like Malachi. It is not like the days of Malachi when they are bringing blind offerings and sick offerings and lame offerings and then hoping that the priests do not notice, and that the Lord will be happy with them. They are actually bringing the first and the best. They are actually complying with the Lord's commandments. But the Lord is saying, 'When you come you are trampling my courts.' Verse 12, 'When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts?' The people were trampling the Lord's courts because they were complying with the exactness of God's commandments; but it was not the obedience of faith from the heart.

Now it is very interesting that this will be the same dynamic right across the world during the ministry of Moses and Elijah for three and a half years. They will actually be confronting a very religious world. When you think about it (obviously during the opening of the seals), the church is hated of all nations, and there is a great multitude coming up out of great tribulation having

washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

At the opening of the sixth seal, the Lord sovereignly intervenes for the sake of the elect, again to preserve the world. We have seven years of the mountain of the Lord's house being established above all of the world kingdoms. The knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth. I have written this (I love this quote), so I will see if I can get it right here. 'The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' Hab 2:14. That is an amazing statement. There is no atheist. 'The earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'

At the same time, the whole world is being polarised, and the whole world will be polarised on this point of obedience. At the same time there will be false messengers proclaiming another way and falling into the sin of presumption, exalting themselves above the fellowship of the presbytery around the Father's throne and proclaiming another way. Antichrist will be one of these great messengers; and he falls.

You have this great falling away then, that is manifest during the blowing of the trumpets. And when the seventh trumpet blows, the heavenly sanctuary has been completely cleansed. The whole world has been polarised. There is a complete separation made then between those who belong to the temple and to the altar (they are characterised by their worship of God) and what is left in the outer court. The outer court fills the whole world because the mountain of the Lord's house will fill the earth. You have this 'outer court dynamic' then in every nation and it is handed over to be trampled by the Gentiles. It will be trampled by the Gentiles in the same way that the nation of Israel was trampling the Lord's courts here. Very religious. All in one sense complying with the exactness of the Lord's commandments, but completely bereft of life;

completely bereft of power; completely bereft of the waters of regeneration. There will be no obedient worship there, even though everyone is still acknowledging God.

Of course then, Antichrist is also leading a big transition here in terms of the seventh to the eighth world kingdom and finally establishing his new image for man and exalting himself above everything that is called God and worship. I am just making a simple point that Moses and Elijah will be running against a very religious world but completely bereft of life and power.

‘Who has asked this of you to the trampling of my courts?’ Then he goes on in verse 13, ‘Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me [because we cannot compensate in any way from actually meeting Christ and knowing Christ. That is the simple point - and then being obedient to Christ. There is absolutely no substitute for that] ... Bring no more futile sacrifice; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths and the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting [I cannot endure your meetings anymore]. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They are a trouble to Me. I am weary of bearing them.’ Verse 15, ‘When you spread out your hands [then he talks about the prayer meetings], I will hide my eyes from you [That is a very sobering point. That is very sobering]; ... I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.’ Isa 1:12-15.

The Lord identified that the offerings, the meetings, the prayers of the people had no integrity because of the condition of their hearts. The word here is being proclaimed and it is revealing the thoughts and motivations that belong to their hearts. Isaiah 29 verse 13 says, ‘Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honour Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me,

and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.” The New American says, ‘And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.’ I think we are getting the feel of this. This is the ‘Lord, Lord’, saying ‘Lord, Lord’, but there is no obedience of faith.

Obedience from the heart is not compliance. We know compliance is the exercise of the mind, motivated by the law of sin. Obedience from the heart is the expression of faith. We know that ‘faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’. The word grants us the freedom to choose, and we then choose what God has chosen for us. The choice belongs to us. The power of faith for obedience comes from God. We have already heard that this morning. This then becomes faith for our baptism. It is the faith of baptism. Having been baptised into Christ (which is into the fellowship of His death and the fellowship of those seven wounding events), we are finding the capacity for obedience each day, for He has already learned our obedience and our heart is being regenerated. Paul rejoices then with the Romans. He says, ‘God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.’ Rom 6:17.

As we walk with Christ on the pathway He has pioneered for us, we are being saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. We are not just learning His obedience; we are becoming obedient from the heart. This is the most amazing thing. We are actually *choosing* this; we are *wanting* this; our heart is being regenerated. It is only possible to become obedient from the heart when the Lord gives us a new heart of flesh through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 1 verse 18 says, “Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like

crimson, they shall be as wool.” Now He is not just saying they will *look* white as snow; He is not talking about them being covered by the blood of Jesus, so God looks through the blood of Jesus and then they look white (as if God is senile). He is saying, ‘They *will be* white as snow’. He is not just talking about forgiveness here. He is saying ‘You will be made righteous, and I will do this through the work of the cross.’ Now we know that there are two sides to the cross - salvation and judgement. The offering of Christ has given us a choice between two alternatives. Now the parallel passage here is Isaiah 3 verse 13. I am picking up some of the statements further in the first 5 chapters of Isaiah here, as a package and pulling them back to the summary or the framework that is in Isaiah chapter 1.

The parallel to this here in Isaiah 3 verse 13, it says, ‘The Lord stands up to plead [This is the Lord standing up], Come now, and let us reason together [This is Christ standing up as judge with eyes like a flame of fire, standing up to judge, saying], ‘Come now, let us reason together. I am the judge, but I have given you freedom of choice. I am talking to you. You have identity. I have given that to you. It belongs to you. You have the dignity of your choice, so come and meet Me in relation to your choice. Come now, let us reason together. The Lord stands up to plead and stands to judge the people.’ He is the judge, but we have the choice.

When the word of Christ is proclaimed, it does give us a choice. We can turn in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit to meet Christ. The conviction of the Holy Spirit is what joins you to the eyes of Christ. This is not a mystical or mysterious thing. The word is proclaimed, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit comes to your heart. That is your opportunity to respond and turn and meet Christ, and the Holy Spirit is connecting you to the eyes of Christ. When the word is proclaimed, it gives us a choice.

We can turn in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit to meet Christ. We see the condition of our heart. We understand the wrath of God upon our sin. That is a big point; we do. We understand the wrath of God upon our sin because His eyes are revealing His wrath; but they are also revealing His jealous love. His jealous love is His wrath. These two things are the same. We see that the only way we can be saved from our sin is by the washing of regeneration. At the same time, we see the glory of our sonship. We see that the only way we can become the son that we have been called to be is by learning the obedience that Christ has already learned for us. We know all of these points.

Alternatively, if we choose to reject the word, we come under the judgement of God that has already been invoked upon us by Christ’s offering. In either case, the righteousness of God is revealed. The cross is the full revelation of the righteousness of God in relation to salvation and judgement. That is an absolute statement. The cross is the full revelation of the righteousness of God in both salvation and judgement. There are two sides of the cross and both of those sides reveal His righteousness. We choose then which side of the cross we want to be.

He goes on and spells it out then in verse 19. ‘If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.’ If you are *willing*, that is your *choice*. The spirit is willing. You do not have the capacity for obedience, but the choice for obedience belongs to us. ‘If you are willing and obedient [because the Holy Spirit does help us there. If we are choosing, the Holy Spirit does help us. He does come to our aid; He does connect us to the offering of Christ so that we are receiving the capacity for obedience.] ... If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land [meaning that you will possess your sanctification as a son of God. You will receive the inheritance that belongs to your

name]. But if you *refuse* [so there is the *choice* ... If you are *willing* or you *refuse* ... Now if you are *willing*, it leads to *obedience* because the capacity for obedience comes from Him.] If you *refuse*, it leads to *rebellion*, [that is disobedience], and you shall be devoured by the sword [that means condemned along with the world. Then he finishes], for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' Meaning this *will* happen. God will make His people righteous.

This is a fantastic point really. God is saying, 'It is all a big mess, but I am going to make you righteous. I am going to have a righteous people. I am going to do it. This will happen. There *will* be a faithful remnant and then there *will* be a great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This *will* happen. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.' He gives us the dignity of choice to choose whether we want to be part of that or not. God will make His people righteous by redeeming the repentant and by destroying the rebellious. He does it both of these ways.

The summary then is Isaiah 1 verse 24. 'Therefore the Lord says, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, "Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries. [Not sure why the 'ah' is there.] I will rid Myself of My adversaries and take vengeance on My enemies. I will turn My hand against you and thoroughly purge away your dross. [He is talking to His people here]. I will turn my hand against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away your alloy. I will restore your judges as at the first and your counsellors as at the beginning. [We are being restored to that. This is being restored to first love.] I will restore your judges as at the first and your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.'"

After this cleansing initiative by the Lord, 'you will be called the city of righteousness,

the faithful city'. He is talking here about the heavenly Jerusalem. Verse 27, alright, down one track, one side of the cross, 'Zion shall be redeemed with justice and her penitents [Now that is not a good word in terms of what we have been learning. It means 'returning ones'. It means 'those who are repenting'. Not 'penance' but 'those who are repentant' - repentant ones, (that is the literal), are returning ones], and her returning ones with righteousness. Verse 28 - this is the other side of the cross, 'The destruction of transgressors and of sinners shall be together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.' We have two sides of the cross. But the Lord will accomplish His work; His people will be made righteous. That is a very simple proposition.

Let us go the next step here. The first step in the Lord's cleansing initiative toward His people was to commission Isaiah a second time so that he became part of the Elijah ministry among the nation. We all need to meet the Lord this way. This is Isaiah 6 verse 1. It says, 'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.' Some of you may be a little bit shocked last week when you heard that we are not going to meet Solomon in heaven. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and he did ask God for wisdom, and God was very pleased that he asked Him for wisdom. There was nothing better that Solomon could have asked for in that situation. That is what he needed in terms of governing the people and leading them as their king. So fantastic that he asked God for wisdom. 'If any man lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives liberally and without reproach.'

For Solomon, the wisdom was fantastic in terms of governing the nation, but it had no capacity to save *him* personally. What he needed in terms of his own salvation was obedience. He could not ask God for obedience. If he did ask God for obedience,

God would have said to him, 'That is the one thing you need. But that is the one thing I cannot give you because that is the fruit of your choice.' That is what He is saying to each and every one of us. He can give us the *capacity* for obedience, but He cannot give us the *choice*. He cannot make the choice for us. He has given that dignity to us. Solomon's wisdom did not save him. Despite all of his wisdom and despite how well he governed the nation, when he got to his latter years, his wives turned his heart away from the Lord. The Scripture is very clear that he did evil then in the sight of the Lord by making the shrines and the temples and the altars to all of the gods that belonged to his wives there on the Mount of Olives.

The Scripture says, 'The Lord became very angry with Solomon on that point.' The Lord was not worried about how well he would govern the nation when it came to his own salvation. The Lord was angry with him because he allowed his heart to be turned away.

Equally, where I am going is this point here 'in the year that King Uzziah died'. This is very interesting because King Uzziah was another example. He is about seven generations on from Solomon, and he starts to reign when he is 16 years old, and he begins really well. The Lord was very pleased with him, and he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and then his fame is spreading similar to Solomon's and his fame reaches right down to Egypt. As he is getting older, his reign was very prosperous for the nation. This is part of the problem probably for the rest of the nation too. It was actually a reasonably good time for the nation.

As Uzziah gets older, he begins to become puffed up. 2 Chronicles 26 verse 16 says, 'But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, [better to stay connected to the weakness of Christ] ...to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn

incense on the altar of incense.' He presumed to go beyond his mandate. He goes in; he burns incense; and the high priest is really shocked by this. He has to take some courage, and he takes 80 priests with him, and he goes in and he withstands him. He withstands the king because the king had exceeded his mandate. But the king could not be entreated.

In fact, the king then became very angry with the high priest and when he is angry, leprosy burst out on his forehead. You probably know this account. Then the priests have to drive the king out of the temple. But at the same time, the king is also running out of the temple, probably because he is so embarrassed by what had happened. He knew he would have been struck by God. He then dies in isolation as a leper, out under the judgement of God. 'In the year that Uzziah died' - this is very significant.

Uzziah was not an impediment to the prophetic ministry of Isaiah, not in any way. What it does show is that this was a year of judgement. This is very significant and very notable, that when the Lord is moving in judgement ... and you will be able to reflect on seasons where the Lord has evidently moved in judgement. The Lord is moving again in judgement; He is bringing judgement. He is certainly bringing judgement against all of our projections and the image that we have created for ourselves. That is His mercy.

When the Lord is moving in judgement, that is when Christ is drawing near, when He is walking among us with eyes like a flame of fire and there is judgement happening. That is the context where He is wanting to meet us. He is wanting to meet us eye to eye. Now is the season to meet the Lord eye to eye, as it was for Isaiah. 'In the year that King Uzziah died', this is not coincidence, while the Lord's moving among the nation in judgement, this was the context for Isaiah to meet the Lord in a new way. Isaiah then says, he saw the Lord. He saw the Lord. That is an amazing

statement — ‘the Lord’. This was a lordship crisis for Isaiah. He would have had an amazing prophetic ministry up until this point. Amazing. He has already prophesied, ‘In the latter days, the mountain of the Lord’s house will fill the whole earth.’ That is confirmed by Micah quite independently — ‘in the mouth of two and three’. This will happen. Isaiah is prophesying all of this, but then he has still to meet the Lord *personally* as his Lord. This was about Isaiah the *man* firstly, not Isaiah the *messenger*.

Isaiah 6 verse 2, ‘Above it stood seraphim [this is above the throne]; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.”’ This is the seraphim here, and they belong to the angelic administration. They are the fiery ones. In a lot of ways, they align themselves with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They belong to the angelic administration, but they are the fiery ones, and they are proclaiming the holiness and sanctification of Yahweh *Elohim* here and they align themselves in terms of that ministry and mandate with the Holy Spirit. Verse 4, ‘And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.’

As I said, Isaiah had already been a preacher of righteousness among the people for some years. He already had a remarkable prophetic ministry, but John says in John 12 verse 41, ‘These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.’ John was specifically talking about the glory of Christ. This is where Isaiah met Christ — ‘saw His glory and spoke of Him’. For Christ is the Lord of hosts, of course. Now Isaiah 3 verse 8. I want to pick up this statement: ‘For Jerusalem stumbled and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His

glory.’ He saw His glory and what is he interfacing with? He is interfacing with the ‘eyes of His glory’.

When Isaiah heard this word and saw the Lord, he responded by saying in [chapter 6] verse 5, ‘Woe is me for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips.’ We have already looked at all of Isaiah’s ‘woe’ statements. There are six of them concerning the people and here Isaiah reserved the seventh statement of woe for himself. ‘Woe is me.’ He has already pronounced ‘woe’ on all of these other behaviours. Then he meets Christ, and he says, ‘Alright, so the seventh and most poignant woe actually belongs to *me*, as I interface with Christ. Woe is *me*.’

‘Woe is me, 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. [He receives this illumination in the light of meeting Christ as King] ...the Lord of hosts.’ Now, why was he a man of unclean lips? I do not think Isaiah had a swearing problem and Isaiah, as we have said, he was not like Lot. He had not compromised his sanctification like Lot. There was no problem with his prophetic message. In fact, it was a remarkable prophetic message that he would have proclaimed to the nation as a preacher of righteousness, all the way down to the opening of the sixth seal. As I said, the mountain of the Lord’s house being established above the nations. That was not the issue. This was all about Isaiah *the man*. This was him, personally in relation to his own personal salvation.

This is the way the Lord is wanting to meet each and every one of us in this season. Nothing to do, in the first case, with what we have done or what we are doing in terms of our years of Christian service or any of these things. He wants to meet *us*. It is about *you*, the *person*, and then your personal confession that Jesus is Lord. This is what was true for Isaiah. It was all about his confession of Christ’s lordship in relation to his own life. This is where he was

recognising that he was a man of unclean lips, because he was not yet confessing Christ as Lord the way he should.

It is our confession of Christ as Lord which leads to our salvation. We can only do this by the Holy Spirit. There are many people who say, 'Lord, Lord'. Jesus is very clear on this. Running around 'Lord, Lord, have we not done all of these things in your name; all of my religious service; all of my history; all of these great things I have done?' The Lord in the end says, 'I never knew you. I do not know where you are from. You are a worker of iniquity. You are a worker of lawlessness. You have never met Me as Lord. I am not your Lord. You are not actually doing the will of My Father in heaven. There is no obedience.'

This was all to do with his personal confession of lordship. As I said, this is Isaiah the *man*, not Isaiah the *messenger*, even though this was a massive transition in his ministry. 'Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar.' Is 6:6. Now the seraphim needed to use the tongs because of the distinction between the angelic administration and the administration of the body of Christ. The tongs are significant. He is taking this coal from the altar of incense. I want to apply this to our situation, and we connect this to Peter, because remember, Isaiah here is seeing the true temple. He is not being taken into the temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem. He is seeing the Lord of hosts high and lifted up, and the train of His robe fills the true temple. This coal is taken from the true altar of incense.

Every piece of furniture that belongs to the true temple belongs to Christ and His ministry. The coal from the altar of incense is particularly talking about an expression of Christ's prayer toward us. The altar of incense is prayer. It is firstly Christ's prayer as our Great High Priest, as He makes

intercession for us. This connects us then to the way Jesus said to Peter, 'I have prayed for you', in the same way He prayed for Isaiah. Isaiah was the beneficiary here of Christ's ministry of prayer toward him. The coal is coming from the altar of incense. Now remember Jesus said to Peter, 'Satan desires to sift you like wheat.' Jesus is not stopping Satan from doing that. He is recognising this is all necessary. But He is saying, 'I have prayed for you, so that when you return [now by implication He is saying to Peter, 'you are going to fall away here, Peter'], ...but when you return, you will strengthen your brethren.' He is praying for Peter in terms of Peter's faith, not to preserve his image, as we have been considering, not to preserve his image. He is not saying, 'Peter, I have prayed for you so that when you are under pressure from Satan, you do not deny me.' He is not praying for him that way. All of this needs to come to an end.

What he is praying for is that when that rooster crows and Jesus turns and he looks at Him, he is praying for the faith that Peter has received in the word that he is now remembering, that that faith will not fail, and he will not draw back from that relational interaction. Here the coal touches Isaiah's lips, and this is exactly the same experience. Then Isaiah is able to confess Christ's lordship.

This is verse 7, 'And he touched my mouth with it and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged.'" This action enabled a true confession of Christ's lordship. This is only possible after meeting Christ and by the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to confess that Christ is Lord without meeting Him. It does not matter how much we know about the Lord; how long we have been following Him; all of our religious service; it does not matter. We cannot confess Christ is Lord until we meet Him.

In verse 8 he says, 'And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me.'" Now this is amazing. This is the fruit of the ministry of prayer toward Isaiah. He is certainly not recoiling in unbelief. Certainly not wallowing in condemnation and going out to do what Judas did. He has received an amazing faith and illumination in this interaction concerning the nature of his own name and sanctification. He has seen his iniquity. The Lord has exposed the depth of his iniquity and he is saying, 'I am a man of unclean lips', while at the same time, he is seeing his calling. He has been sacked like all of the disciples. He is had this amazing prophetic ministry, been sacked, and then meets the Lord this way - very personally, and the Lord re-advertises the job then in verse 8. He puts it out in the newspaper again.

Isaiah is the only person here, so he has a good shot at the job; but this is his job. This is his job, but the Lord wanted to meet him personally to be able to recommission him here. He is here and the Isaiah says in verse 8, 'And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?"' Now there is not a big queue of people all lining up. It is just Isaiah there, but Isaiah has received faith in this interaction and the Lord has prayed for him in relation to his own sanctification so he can then respond in faith, full of confidence. 'Here I am! Send me. I do not know what all of this entails yet, but here I am! Send me. You are my Lord. I have met You. Send me.'

Isaiah responded in this way because of the faith that he had received from the Lord in relation to the sanctification of his own name and calling to be a messenger.

After the prophet Isaiah had met the Lord in this prophetic vision, he was recommissioned as a messenger who belonged to the Elijah ministry. He is now connected to the altar of incense too in terms

of the ministry of prayer; and he is connected to all of this in his own family. Now this is a big point. Isaiah was connected to this in relation to his own family so now he could proclaim the word that belongs to the Elijah ministry from the basis of testimony. It is very interesting when you look at his children. He had two children, and his first child was called (it is very difficult to pronounce these names) Shear-Jashub. You will have to look that up yourself. What it means is 'a remnant shall return'. This was Isaiah's message - a remnant shall return; the firstborn; a remnant shall return. That is the priority of his message. His second born was called (and I am definitely not going to get this right) Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. I think I have really made a meal of that. It means 'quickly to spoil; plunder speedily'. That is the child where the Lord says, 'Before that second child knows how to say my father or my mother, the whole ten northern tribes are going to be conquered by the Assyrian kingdom.'

Isaiah is connected to his message here very practically in relation to his own family. Now as he proclaims this as a word of testimony to the nation, he is connected to the Elijah ministry. Now his word was polarising, and it had the capacity to turn their hearts; while at the same time, when it was rejected, it was invoking judgement. We will leave it there for today. There is a lot more to look at and say on that.