

The Prophet's Commission

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 6. Holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.

The whole earth is full of his glory. At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Woe to me, I cried. I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.

Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, See, this has touched your lips, and your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I, send me. He said, Go and tell this people.

[1:30] Be ever hearing, but never understanding. Be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused. Make their ears dull, and close their eyes.

Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. Then I said, For how long, O Lord?

And he answered, Until the cities lie ruined, and without inhabitants. Until the houses are left deserted, and the fields ruined, and ravaged.

Until the Lord has sent everyone far away, and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land. Well, 150 years ago, the Pony Express was a private mail service that carried mail by a relay of horseback riders.

[2:44] And the trail stretched from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California. At its best, it took 10 days for a letter to make the 2,000 mile trip.

Now, being a rider for the Pony Express was not for the faint of heart. You were expected to ride 75 to 100 miles every day, changing horses every 15 to 25 miles.

You rode whatever the weather through hostile Indian territory, and in fact, to increase the speed of the getaway when Indians were attacking, they traveled light, riding merely in shirt sleeves, even in the fierce winter weather.

It was almost as hard as being a UPS truck driver. Now, how would you recruit volunteers for such a job? Well, in 1860, the San Francisco newspaper printed this ad for the Pony Express.

Wanted. Young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders willing to risk daily.

[4:06] Orphans preferred. So that they need not tell a mother or a father if they found him dead along the way.

Around 2,700 years ago, God, the thrice holy king, had a message to give to his people, Judah.

And he would announce it to them through a man. Now, it would be a difficult message of judgment that would not be at all popular to the people.

It would expose God's spokesman to all sorts of hatred, rejection, and persecution. So, how does God recruit a volunteer for such a job?

Well, he comes to Isaiah in a vision. And he reveals himself to him as the holy king, the sovereign, who rules over all.

[5:09] He's of such majesty and moral purity that sinless seraphs humbly cover their faces and cry holy. And Isaiah himself immediately feels how sinful he is and how unfit he is for service and to be in the presence of this holy, holy, holy king.

And so, he declares his own woe. He knows he deserves death. He's just waiting for the blow of God's judgment to fall upon him.

But instead, he's surprised by grace. For as it was read, the flaming coal was taken from the altar and applied to his lips to atone for his sin. And he's at once assured that his guilt is taken away and his sin is atoned for.

So, God's holiness stunned him, but so did his grace. So, when the forgiven Isaiah hears the king saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us?

Isaiah volunteers, here am I. Send me. He gladly offers himself up to this king to be his servant, whatever the mission is to be, whatever the command.

[6:32] So, this exalted king recruits his servants by amazing them with his grace. By forgiving them. How's that for recruiting methods?

And God does not first spell out the assignment that he has for this prophet when he's asking for volunteers.

Even before Isaiah knows what the mission is, he pre-commits to doing it. Send me. Now, that's trust, but we can safely trust the one who sends us when we've already seen that he is the one who himself humbled himself from the throne and took upon him the form of a servant made in the likeness of man and became obedient unto death, even in the death of the cross, to save us from our sins, to atone for our sins.

That's enough to secure the willing service of Isaiah. Here am I. Send me. And nothing less will secure your willing service to this great king.

To know that you're cleansed, your guilt is gone through the sacrifice and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder, have you bowed before this king?

[7:52] You see, I've never seen this king. No, he is the immortal invisible. But, God showed Isaiah a vision of this king and then told Isaiah to tell you what he saw.

This is your king. Have you bowed before him? Have you said to him, here am I. I'm yours. I'm at your disposal to live not like I want but as you want.

You see, he comes demanding full surrender to his will. And any reluctance to do so is a signal. It's a signal that either we're not cleansed from our sin or we need to see afresh what Isaiah saw.

God's holiness, our sinfulness, our deservingness of judgment, God himself providing the remedy to atone for sin through the sacrifice of his own son.

Now, that's what makes every believer offer themselves up to Christ and say, here I am. I'm yours. I don't belong to myself. I belong to you. Now, we need to go on hearing then the law and the gospel, the law that ever convinces us of God's holiness and of our sinfulness and the gospel that ever convinces us that Jesus' grace is so great that it saved me, it found out me and cleansed me and made me his servant.

[9:27] So, we're looking here in Isaiah 6 at seven key themes that are like threads that run right throughout the whole of Isaiah's prophecy. They're like cliff notes.

If you've got these seven points, then you've got huge information about what is to be found in this book of Isaiah. And they're all found here at the commissioning service of the prophet.

They strike him and they set the course of his whole ministry. Now, the first five we saw last week. Number one, the Lord is the exalted universal king and he reigns over all.

Secondly, the king is preeminently holy and hereafter Isaiah refers to him often as the holy one of Israel. Third, the king's own people are not holy but sinful and deserve God's wrath and judgment. And fourth, the king himself provides the remedy and atoning sacrifice. And then fifth, forgiven sinners willingly serve their king.

[10:37] Here am I, send me. Now, there's just two more left. And they're found in the commissioning of this prophet. Isaiah's, here am I, send me, is met by a commission.

Marching orders are given to his servant by the king. And he says, go and tell this people, be ever hearing but never understanding. Be ever seeing but never perceiving.

Make the heart of this people calloused. Make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes. Hear with their ears.

Understand with their hearts and turn and be healed. What a strange message to give to a prophet. You tell them to be always hearing but never understanding. What a strange mission to give to Isaiah to make the heart of the people calloused, to make their ears dull and their eyes closed so that they won't turn and be healed.

[11:51] Isaiah is being sent on a blinding, deafening, and hardening mission that will leave this nation totally unable to repent and be healed.

Now, the first truth then that we come to, number six, but the first for today, is that God decrees that Isaiah's ministry will have a hardening effect upon the people.

His ministry will have a hardening effect. Intentionally so. God means for it to do just this. that's why he's sending Isaiah. His preaching will not make it easier for the people to repent and believe.

It will make it harder. It will leave them more dull and apathetic and hardened in their sin than before Isaiah even spoke to them. Now, that's strange to our ears, perhaps.

How are we to understand this strange mission? Well, let's ask, how did Isaiah understand it? What did he do in obedience to this mission?

[12 : 57] Did Isaiah think, well, let's see, I'm called to preach in such a way that they won't see. So I've got to use real big words that they won't understand. I've got to make the message so obscure and hidden that I'll speak in these weird, this weird vocabulary to keep the message hidden.

not at all. That's not what we find in the 66 chapters of this book. We'll see in this book that Isaiah's message was communicated most clearly, simply, straightforward, so much so that the sophisticated crowd was offended at its simplicity.

It sounds like kindergarten stuff here, Isaiah. Give us something to chew on. Isaiah is not trying to keep the message obscure.

He speaks plainly about God's holiness, about their sinfulness, about their deservingness of God's coming judgment, and even includes melting calls to repent and believe, and so to turn and be healed and be saved.

But he gives it to people who don't like the message. And to people who don't like the message, it was just such preaching that had the effect of hardening them further against it so that they would not turn and be healed.

[14 : 32] Jesus says in John 3, 19 and 20, this is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

And everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. So what happens when light comes into contact with lovers of darkness?

Well, left to themselves, they're further hardened by that light. They're further hardened against it. they hate it and their hatred of it increases when they hear it and they reject it again and bore deeper into the darkness.

So kids, you have a big rock in your backyard and you go out in the middle of the day and you push that rock over and there are all the little critters of darkness and they're under the rock because they love darkness.

that's the habitat that suits them. What do they do? Ah, freedom! Freedom at last from this darkness under this rock.

[15 : 48] And we embrace the light. No, they scurry off as fast as they can and burrow down in deeper into the darkness because they hate the light. Their nature is to love darkness.

darkness. Even so, Isaiah is sent to preach the light of truth to lovers of darkness who hate the light. And each time they hear it, they will push it away from them and that event will leave their hearts more hardened, their eyes more blind, their ears more deaf and further unable to turn and be healed.

You see, each rejection makes the next rejection all the easier to do. It's a hardening ministry. And so they keep rejecting and rejecting until they come to the point when they're hardened beyond recovery.

When God gives people up to their own sinful choices. Three times in Romans chapter 1, we read God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them up. There comes a point when that's it.

[17 : 04] It's beyond the point of return. When the next rejection will be the final one. Well, Judah is just at that decisive point when Isaiah shows up to preach God's word.

They've been rejecting, rejecting, rejecting, and they are about to hear it another time and reject and reject and reject until they will not be able to turn and so be healed.

And so, Isaiah is told at the very outset, it's going to be his preaching that will have the effect of blinding, deafening, and hardening them to the point of crossing that line beyond which any man that goes is lost forever, doomed.

And so, Judah's judgment is fixed, it's determined without any possibility of being saved. They as a nation, under Isaiah's preaching, will reach that point of the end of God's patience and mercy where judgment is all that is left.

Now, that's the inevitable result of Isaiah's preaching. It's God's own purpose for sending Isaiah to them. It's clear as can be in this passage.

[18 : 32] He is to preach so that this will happen, so that they will be hardened, deafened, and blinded, and not turn and be healed. So, you see, Isaiah's own preaching is itself a judgment of God upon these people for their earlier rejection of the light.

okay, you don't want the light, I'm going to send it again knowing that every time that light shines in your face, you'll hate it all the more, and you will cross over the line where you will be so hardened that only judgment will fall.

You see, the gospel is a two-edged sword. It's a savor of life unto life for some, but it's a savor of death that works death for others. Now, that's not a popular truth, but it is nonetheless a Bible truth. found in the Old and the New Testament. God hardens the hearts of sinners. If your view of God is not big enough to include that, you've got the wrong God in your mind.

The Bible's testament about this God is He hardens the hearts of sinners. Six times in the book of Exodus, God says He hardened Pharaoh's heart.

[19 : 46] heart. And Paul tells us in Romans 9.18 that that was not just an isolated incident that happened just with Pharaoh. No, it's the sovereign right of this king that we've seen high and lifted up.

He has mercy on whom He will have mercy and He hardens who He wants to harden. He is the sovereign king with that sovereign prerogative and He exercises it.

He hardens whom He wants to harden. We're all God rejecting truth, rejecting sinners deserving hell. And to some such sinners He gives mercy and makes them a monument of His mercy for all eternity.

But to others, He gives them over to their own hardness and they become a monument to His justice for all eternity. The king is sovereign in dispensing mercy to the one and judgment to the other.

Both deserve judgment. God owes no man mercy. He is sovereign king of all. And here we see that He actually hardens the people by sending preachers to them with His word which will stir up their animosity and harden their hearts against it leaving them unable to turn and be healed.

[21 : 13] So God hardens the hearts of sinners. But the guilt for their hardness and blindness and deafness is all theirs. None is God's. Zephaniah 7, 11 and 12 says, But they refused to pay attention.

They turned their eyes away. Stubbornly, they turned their back and stopped up their ears. They made their hearts so hard.

They made their hearts so hard as flint. And they would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent them by the Spirit through the earlier prophets.

So they hardened their own hearts, even as it's said of Pharaoh twice in Exodus. They stopped their own ears and none so deaf as he who will not hear. They blinded their own eyes and none so blind as he who will not see.

They hardened their own hearts. It was their sin that blinded them. It was their pride and self-righteousness that caused them to be blind to their own sinfulness and need of mercy.

[22 : 24] Their hardness of heart was their own fault. Now that's the condition of all of us as we came into this world. Blind, deaf, hardened hearts.

That hate the light. Left to ourselves, we would never see our sin turn and come to Christ and be healed.

The hearing ear, the seeing eye, the believing repentant heart, these are gifts of God. And all God needs to do to harden men's hearts is to withhold such gifts.

And men will harden their own hearts. Augustine put it this way, God thus blinds and hardens, God does, simply by letting alone and withdrawing his aid.

Deuteronomy 29, to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands. hands. He has not given you eyes that see.

[23 : 37] He has not given you ears that hear. Folks, we wouldn't see or hear or love anything of God's truth had he not given us such new hearts, new ears, and new eyes.

We still would be ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. We'd never get it. We'd listen but never perceive. We wouldn't see that that's me, the sinner, that needs to come to Christ.

That's not talking about my name. That's talking about me. Now, we love to quote verse 8 out of Isaiah 6, don't we?

Missionary conferences, here am I, send me. Do you know the New Testament never quotes that passage? But it does quote verses 9 and 10 about the hardening of their hearts some six times. The Lord and his apostles quote that passage in the New Testament. And so, by looking at the use of the Lord and his apostles of this passage, we have a check upon our own interpretation.

[24 : 48] Have we rightly understood Isaiah's mission? Well, let's go to the New Testament and test it against the Lord's own view of it and the apostles' use of it.

How did they use verses 9 and 10 of Isaiah? How did they understand it? And we begin where Jesus is telling the parable of the sower in Mark chapter 4.

And our Lord quotes these words, verses 9 and 10 of Isaiah, about the hardening and deafening and blinding of the eyes. He quotes these words to explain to his own disciples in private why it is that he's teaching now in parables.

Sometimes to teach him parables it was to make the message clear. But this time Jesus tells that he used parables not to make the message clear, but to conceal the message and to leave men blind, deaf, and hardened and not understanding.

Mark 4, 11 and 12. He says to his men, he says, the secrets of the kingdom of God, the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, has been given to you, but to those on the outside, everything is said in parables so that, it's a purpose, so that they may be ever seen but never perceiving, ever hearing but never understanding, otherwise they might turn and be forgiven.

[26 : 23] Jesus, why are you using parables in this setting? So that though people are hearing something, they won't get it. So they heard the outward parable about the man who went out and scattered the seed and then the seed grew and some died and some lived.

They didn't have a clue on the spiritual meaning of it. No, he gave that to his disciples in private. But to those outside, it was in parables so that hearing they would not hear, seeing would not see and not turn and be forgiven.

We've understood Isaiah correctly according to Jesus. Their blinding and deafening and hardening is God's judgment on the nation for their stubborn rejection of Christ and his message.

Matthew's account of this parable and Jesus quoting from Isaiah chapter 6, 9 and 10. He quotes, Matthew says, that the Lord says that this prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in his hearers.

In the first century, Jesus' own hearers. Isaiah 6 is being fulfilled right then, not just in Isaiah's day, but now in the first century. There's a multi-fulfillment, a fulfillment in the generation of Isaiah, but also a fulfillment in Jesus' day.

[27 : 52] The nation, Jesus is another prophet, but he's the ultimate prophet and he's receiving the ultimate rejection even as Isaiah was rejected.

The nation was now given over to judgment for rejecting Christ and his gospel. They would hear but not understand for he would speak to them in parables.

Punishment for their stubborn rejection of the Christ and his truth. But then he turns to his disciples again and he says, but blessed are your eyes because they do see and blessed are your ears because they do hear.

there was a remnant of those in Israel who did believe. And folks, if you get it this morning and you understand the gospel, it's because your ears have been blessed.

Your eyes have been blessed. And so they not only hear the parable, they hear Jesus' explanation of it. and it's all given by God.

[29 : 09] A right understanding and reception of the truth must be given by God. It's all grace. All of grace. And then John's gospel. John also uses this passage from Isaiah 6 to explain the widespread rejection of Christ by the Jews.

He says, even though Jesus, John 12, even though Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, Lord who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed.

They had their reasons now why they didn't believe, but John points back to the ultimate cause of God's purposes in Isaiah 6. For this reason they could not believe, because as Isaiah says elsewhere, he has blinded their eyes and deafened their hearts so they can neither see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts nor turn and I would heal them.

Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. This passage is about hardening the hearts of those who hear the message of Jesus because they had already rejected him.

the book of Acts ends how? Well, the apostle Paul in Rome under house arrest awaiting trial and while he's waiting, large number of Jews came to him and from morning till evening he explained and declared to them that the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

[30 : 48] Some were convinced by what he said but others would not believe. And Paul's last words to them before he left were to quote from Isaiah's prophecy. prophecy.

The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet, go to this people and say you will be ever hearing but never understanding. You will be ever seeing but never perceiving for this people's heart has become calloused.

They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them.

That passage was still being fulfilled. in the days of the apostle Paul. So therefore, I want you to know, Paul says, that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear.

They will listen. So the Jews rejection of the gospel is all part of God's plan to take the gospel then to the nations. And they will hear.

[31 : 50] The reason you have heard and believed the gospel and turned and been healed is because this passage in Isaiah 6 is being fulfilled.

Even yet today, the Gentiles are listening whereas the Jewish nation was hardened. Paul talks about that in Romans 11.

There's a sobering warning here for any who hear the word of God. Hearing the word of God is serious business. It does not leave you as it find you.

It doesn't. You may think it does. You may think that you go out just as you came in. Not so, says Isaiah 6. It does something to you.

Always does something to you. Like rain falling often upon the earth. It either softens you or it hardens you. It either softens you unto repentance so that you do turn and seek the Lord and his mercy or if it doesn't do that, it does do this.

[33 : 04] It further hardens you in sin and rebellion against the Lord. Murray says we must never forget that it is by God's appointment that if his word does not quicken, it must deaden.

It either quickens or deadens. There's no middle ground. There's nobody that goes out as he came in. So what's happening to you as the rain of God's word is falling on your heart today?

Are you being softened to repent or hardened in your resistance and rebellion against the king?

Each refusal to repent makes the next refusal all the easier.

It reminds me of the friends that we had that rented an apartment in Georgia and on their first night they found out why it was so inexpensive. As they're just snuggling in for the night, about to fall off, suddenly they hear the rumble and roar of a freight train.

And it sounds like it's coming in through their bedroom. And it shakes the walls and it shakes the bed and the noise is deafening. And needless to say they get no sleep that night.

[34 : 18] Not much the rest of the week and a little sleep the second week, a little more the third week. But it wasn't long before they were sleeping right through the night, trains and all.

Somehow they had hardened themselves against the sounds of the train. So that though the train was still as loud as it ever was, they didn't perceive it.

They didn't hear it. And some of you may remember times in the past when upon the hearing of God's word preached, calling you to repent, your heart was strangely moved.

And you felt the tuggings of God upon your heart. But you pushed him off, not today. No. No. No. And perhaps many years have gone by and you still sit under the preaching of God's word.

But your heart is no longer softened. Rather you can sit through sermons easily and be unscathed, unmoved, untouched, hardened. No longer bothered by the thunders of God's law and judgment.

[35 : 33] No longer moved by its gracious invitations. You've become skilled at listening and not hearing. Slowly, imperceptively, with each rejection, each putting off, the next rejection, next week's rejection, became all the easier so that your heart has been growing harder right under the preaching of God's word.

In fact, it is the preaching of the word that has had that effect upon your heart of hardening it, blinding you further, deafening you further. It is a serious thing to hear the word that God speaks to men.

It does not leave you as it finds you. And there is a point of no return where God says rejection, rejection, rejection, harder, harder, harder, and he gives you up to your own hard heart. judgment falls. There is no repentance for you. There is no healing, forgiveness for you either. I dare say God has been patient with many of you. He has received your no's, your rejections. Week after week, you said no to him.

[36 : 59] He has been patient, patient, patient. But there is a line by men unseen which any who cross are lost forever.

Where is that mysterious line? We don't know. God knows. But don't try his patience. You who hear his voice, today repent and harden not your heart.

Hear the warning from Isaiah. confess now. Repent now. On the spot. Right there where you are. Ask him for mercy for Jesus' sake.

When we come back to Isaiah, what an assignment. How would you like that assignment? You go preach to the people and know this, that your job is to harden them. You're going to be a failure in the eyes of the world.

Your message will be rejected and Judah will only get harder until judgment finally falls. But Isaiah is not reconsidering. He's not backing out.

[38 : 02] He didn't say, I didn't know that this is the job you were going to send me on. Send somebody else like Moses did. We don't hear that from Isaiah. The only question on his lips is how long? How long is what he asks.

Verse 11. How long will it be this way that my message will be rejected and only harden the hearts of the people of Judah further, making them riper for judgment? And the king answers in verses 11 and 12.

Until the cities, those cities that were now bustling with people, until those cities lie ruined and without inhabitant like ghost towns, until the houses now occupied with families are left deserted and empty, and until the fields now so fruitful are ruined and ravaged like scorched earth, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken.

Now these things that we've just read were the old curses that were threatened if Judah ever broke faith with her God, if she ever rebelled against her covenant Lord.

Exile, forced to go into a distant land, was the ultimate curse for rejecting the Lord's word. He had warned them. Even as they came into the land, he had warned them.

[39 : 20] The promised land was not theirs. It belonged to their covenant Lord and king. And he had graciously allowed them to live on the land and enjoy its bounty as long as they served him.

But if they should ever rebel against their king and disobey his law, that land would vomit them out of it. God himself would drive them out of that land into a distant country.

And that would be the Lord's own doing. He would do it, as verse 12 says, even though he uses the Babylonians as his instrument, his rod of his wrath.

So Isaiah is told that Israel's hardness and unbelief will continue at least until the exile, at least until there is this destruction of the nation. That's at least 150 years into the future.

In other words, that's all of Isaiah's life. What a mission. All your life to be preaching to hard hearts. Go. Go. But the unbelief of the nation as a whole was even to continue through to the coming of Messiah, that last great prophet.

[40 : 39] And that would lead to their last great rejection and their final destruction in 70 AD at the hands of the Romans. And so verse 13 says, and though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste.

A tenth out of all the people, a tenth isn't much, but itself will be suffering a destroying plague from the Lord. But then we have that wonderful word but.

In 13b, the judgment is not to have the final word in God's plan for Judah in the world. He says, but as the terebinth and oak leaves stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.

You see the glimmer of sunshine breaking through the clouds of judgment. And this brings us to the last of the key themes of the book. that the nation will be exiled, but then a remnant will be restored to the promised land.

In other words, judgment will fall, away they will go into exile, the land will be decimated, the houses, cities emptied, but then there will be a return.

[41 : 59] The holy seed will be the stump where? In the land. There will be a return to the land. Isaiah is told to name one of his sons what?

Shir jeshub because it means a remnant shall return. Isaiah in spite of the destruction of the people and the land and the nation there will come forth a return.

There will always be a remnant chosen by grace. That's what Paul says. Always be a remnant. The holy seed, the true people of God, they're holy and they partake of the holiness of this holy, holy, holy king.

And in this remnant all the promises of salvation will be finally fulfilled in that seed, that stump. All the promises to Abraham about numerous offspring, about a land, about all the nations being blessed, it's going to happen through that stump.

[43 : 09] Promises to David about a king who would reign in righteousness forever and ever over all. God's ultimate purpose in history was to save a people for himself to his own glory.

And though he brings judgment upon judgment, yet a remnant will always survive until from them the chosen Messiah would come and all the promises would be fulfilled in him.

God is wasting them with judgments. He will leave the nation of Judah like a forest of stumps after all the trees have been cut down.

There's not one left standing, decimated, Destroyed! Utter doom is forecasted and determined for Judah. And yet, in one of those stumps, life remains to sprout again.

The only hope for the world lies in that stump. The only hope for the nations, for you and me and my salvation and your salvation lies in that stump.

[44 : 24] A holy seed in the land. A mere remnant so low that you'd never think that they would amount to anything. But God's commitment to his promises and purposes will stand.

It will not be thwarted. He means to bring them to fruition regardless of Israel's rebellion. That's not thwarted his plan. It's not derailed his plan.

Yes, he keeps his sure word of judgment, but also his sure word of blessing. All of his covenant obligations will be kept. His blessings and his cursings.

So though judgments will fall, they will not have the final word. Destruction will not be the end of God's plan. But he will spare a remnant through which the Savior will come who will bring salvation blessings to all the nations as we heard in the Sunday school hour.

So after the exile restoration and when Isaiah speaks about the restoration, he speaks in glorious terms. He speaks of something far better than the way it was in Judah before the exile.

[45 : 37] He's not just saying, you know, after the exile, we're going to get back in the land and it will be like old days. No, no. It's going to far outstrip what it used to be. And he speaks of glorious realities.

I'm going to mention four very briefly. Four amazing things that will happen in the restoration and with that we'll close. The restored kingdom includes, number one, the reign of David's greater son as king.

So the holy seed will be the stump in the land. There's that little group. You don't expect much out of a stump, do you? It just lays in the backyard and doesn't do anything. Oh, but watch it.

Watch it. There's life in that stump. Chapter 11 and verse 1. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit.

fruit. And from that one, from Jesse's son, David, and David's greater son, Jesus, will come all the fulfillment of the promises.

[46 : 41] In that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will rally to him and his place of rest will be glorious. And in that day, the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people.

But included in that restoration of his people back into the land is the nations now. The peoples, Gentile believers from all the nations will also be gathered into the people of God to become that newly constituted people of God, the church, the Israel of God.

And so that's the second truth about the restoration. It includes the Gentiles in this redeemed community. Gentiles and Jews equally heirs together of all the promises.

Thirdly, the restoration includes the removal of sin. Since sin brought the exile, so restoration from the exile will only be brought about as sin is removed.

That's why they must leave. That's why they can't stay in the land with the holy God because of sin. So if they're going to come back, there must be the removal of sin. Pray tell, how will that happen? There will come one suffering servant of Jehovah who will take our transgressions upon himself and he will be crushed and we will be healed, cleansed of sin.

[48:10] Grace alone will save a remnant and people from all the nations will flock to this savior. And lastly, the restoration to the promised land is stretched way beyond any boundaries over in Palestine to include in chapters 65 and 66 a whole new heavens and a whole new earth is to be the inheritance of this reconstituted people of God, a place of perfect bliss forever and ever.

These are the amazing things and over and over when Isaiah speaks of restoration, it far outstrips anything that ever happened to a few Jews that returned back to Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Rather, it reaches all the way to Messiah's coming and the glorious days that he will bring through his work and through his reign. So Isaiah, in summary, is a book about Christ.

He saw Jesus' glory and he spoke about him. And so all the praise is left at his feet. If there's to be any restoration after judgment, it's all going to be because of him.

But then also Isaiah is a book about you, dear Christian. It's not just a book about Jesus. It's a book about you. It's a book about the people of God, the redeemed remnant, and that is you.

[49:36] You are a part of this restored kingdom, the newly constituted people of God. You are one of these from the nations rallying around the Lord Jesus, joined to Christ and so made equal fellow heirs of all the promises along with believing Jews.

Your sins that cried out for damnation have been removed through the blood of Jesus. You are one of the holy remnant to inhabit the new heavens and the new earth, the home of righteousness, and it's all by grace.

All by grace. Think how often you rejected the gospel. At any point, God could have said, that's it. I will not give her another chance.

But he didn't. He came in mercy to you. Gave you a new heart so that you would turn and be healed. Grace. It was grace. He cleansed you of your sin, and he opened your eyes, and he gave you ears to hear, and a heart to worship and love this God.

Well, then offer yourself up to him. Offer yourself up to be a servant forever. Here am I. Use me. No, you're not a prophet like Isaiah. But like Isaiah, you have been given an assignment from this same king.

[50:53] All in his kingdom have an assignment from him. Something to do, something to suffer for his sake. We don't pick the assignment. We don't mix how much pain and pleasure goes into it.

It's a cup that's handed to us. So take the cup and drink it gladly. Serve this king. Isaiah had quite an assignment, didn't he? Difficult assignment all his life.

Church history offers some evidence that Isaiah is one in that group of whom Hebrews 11 speaks of some were sawn in two.

That was Isaiah's end. He met tremendous resistance and rejection. Sometimes when they hate the message, they shoot the messenger.

Some were sawn in two. And yet there was everything in this commissioning vision and words from the king to support and to hold up Isaiah throughout the whole of that difficult assignment.

[51:56] Yes, the mission was impossible for a man to fulfill, but Isaiah, keep your eyes on me, this king, this king who reigns sovereign over all. This king who is bringing about his eternal purposes to bring forth salvation to the ends of the earth through his son Jesus.

Trust me. Serve me gladly. May we too find in our king all that we need to faithfully carry out our assignment. Whatever it is that he's given us, difficulty, consequences, in all we do, we serve the king of kings, and we're able to do so in fellowship with him who has cleansed us of our sins.

That's our motivation. Let's sing from our hymnal 714. With harps and vials there stands a great throng in the presence of Jesus and sings this new song.

As he by grace made you a part of this throng, then let us serve him gladly, and if not, seek him today. Let's stand as we sing 714. 714.

Let's pray. Thank you, Father, for your purposes from before the creation of the world. Thank you that nothing could stop you from fulfilling those purposes of bringing salvation, blessing to all the nations, even to our doorstep, even into our hard hearts, unbelieving eyes, and deaf ears.

[53 : 34] thank you for what you've done through your son and our savior. Make him more precious to us. Thank you that we can take from his hand whatever assignment he gives us, knowing that those are nail-pierced hands that have already atoned for all of our sins.

And so knowing and relying on his love, we go forth to serve gladly, willingly, that others might come to know this grace in Christ too.

Send us on our way rejoicing in Jesus' name. Amen.