

Isaiah

God's Help Is on the Way

Marilyn Kunz & Catherine Schell

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Isaiah 6—8

Called to Serve

In the first five chapters of Isaiah, the prophet has indicted Israel, the people of God, as rebellious sons who are utterly estranged from their Father. He has described the nation as a battered body whose wounds are untreated and the once faithful and righteous Jerusalem as a prostitute. God’s vineyard, Judah, has produced only the sour wild grapes of murder and injustice.

The LORD hates and rejects the religious festivals and sacrifices that mask his people’s dissolute, cynical lives. He vows to remove the very framework of their unjust society and to lay waste their proud and wealthy land. In his anger, the LORD will bring another nation to take away his people, just as snarling lions seize their prey and carry it off.

In your preparation for this discussion, read chapters 1—5 aloud, visualizing the vivid word pictures the prophet uses to describe God’s rebellious people. Then study chapters 6—8, using the questions provided for discussion.

KEY VERSE (See page 11)

Isaiah 6:8

Read Isaiah 6:1-13

“Here I am. Send me!”

1. As you read this section, try to visualize the scene Isaiah describes. In verses 1-5, what does he see? What does he hear?

*Note: In verse 1, the **temple** refers to the holy place in front of the Holy of Holies. In verse 2, **seraphim** are heavenly beings mentioned in Scripture only in this verse. In verse 4, the temple being filled with **smoke** recalls the scene at the dedication of the temple in the time of King Solomon (2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-13), and the scene on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law to Moses (Exodus 19:18-20).*

2. What effect does this vision of the holiness and the glory of God have upon Isaiah?

Of what is Isaiah keenly aware?

3. How is Isaiah's guilt removed and his sin forgiven?

*Note: The one **live coal (burning coal, NASB)** represents the temple altar from which it came—that sin's penalty was paid by a substitute offered in the sinner's place.*

4. What is Isaiah's immediate response to the LORD's question?

What assignment is he given?

5. In contrast to Isaiah's awareness and confession of sin at the revelation of God's holiness, what will be the response of **this people** to the message he brings from God (verses 9-10)?

Note: Isaiah is not to expect success. The people's long, continued rebellion against God has brought them to the place where Isaiah's message will only serve to harden their hearts further, even though it could save them if they would obey it.

6. What is God's stern answer to Isaiah's question in verse 11?

How complete will be his judgment of the land?

What is the one ray of hope in the picture of the burned tree in verse 13?

Read Isaiah 7:1-25

A Sign

7. King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel come to fight against Jerusalem since Judah has refused to form an alliance with them against Assyria.

What is the reaction of King Ahaz and the people of Judah to their approach (verses 2, 4)?

8. What commands from the LORD is Isaiah to give to Ahaz?

What does God say will come of the plans of Syria and Israel (*Ephraim*)?

What prediction is made about Israel's not-too-distant future?

9. Describe the exchange between the LORD and King Ahaz (verses 10-17).

What does God want, and how does Ahaz respond?

What is the LORD's reaction (verse 13)?

10. What does Ahaz's refusal of God's offer to choose a sign reveal about himself?

What sign (verses 14-16) does the LORD himself proceed to offer the king as a guarantee of the fulfillment of his promises in verses 5-7?

*Note: This sign of **Immanuel** and deliverance in the immediate future also concerned the then-distant future coming of Messiah. See Matthew 1:22-23.*

11. What two graphic metaphors (verses 18-20) does the LORD use to describe the effects of the armies he will call to invade Israel?

What will the land be like after this (verses 21-25)?

*Note: In verse 15, **curds and honey** is the meager fare of the poor.*

Read Isaiah 8:1-15

Assyria Will Sweep Over Judah

Another more specific sign of the coming destruction of Syria and Israel is given through Isaiah. Before Isaiah and his wife conceive a son, his name, meaning “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil” and foretelling disaster, is announced before witnesses at God’s command.

12. According to verse 4, how quickly will Assyria plunder the capitals of Syria and Israel?

13. How will Assyria’s invasion of Syria and Israel affect Judah (verses 5-8)?

What contrast does God draw between his help, rejected by Judah, and the consequences of any Assyrian intervention that Judah might seek for protection from Syria and Israel?

*Note: **The gently flowing waters of Shiloah** (verse 6) represents God's quiet help, as it refers to a stream that flowed from a large spring on the east side of Jerusalem. The **Euphrates River**, flowing through Mesopotamia, represents the power of Assyria.*

14. **Conspiracy** (verse 12) can also be translated “treaty” and can refer to an alliance. If so, Isaiah is saying, “Don’t trust Assyria, or fear Syria.” Instead, of whom should they be in awe (verses 11-13)?

Whom or what do people fear today?

What difference would Isaiah’s vision (6:1-5) make as to whom and what you fear?

15. What does **the LORD Almighty** become to Israel and Judah since they refuse to fear him (verses 14-15)?

Read Isaiah 8:16-22

Whom to Consult

16. The people of Judah have rejected his spoken message, so what will Isaiah do (verses 16-17)?

What are the prophet and his children to be (verse 18)?

When people don't listen to God and his testimony, whom are they tempted to **consult**?

What strong advice does Isaiah give in such a situation?

17. What is the result for those who look for guidance and search for answers in the wrong way and in the wrong place (verses 21-22)?

SUMMARY

1. Contrast Isaiah's experience in 6:1-8 with that of the people in 8:21-22.
2. What do these chapters reveal about:
 - the call of Isaiah?

 - his assignment from God?

 - his attitude toward God?

 - the situation he faced as God's messenger?
3. What have you learned in these chapters about obeying and trusting God?

Read the Key Verse together

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!”

Isaiah 6:8

PRAYER

As your prayer, sing or read this hymn by Reginald Heber (1783-1826):

*Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.*

Amen.