

Isaiah 6-8

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Isaiah 6

- **Isaiah 6:1**

- It is believed that King *Uzziah* died in **740 BC**
- The prophet *Micah*, a contemporary of Isaiah, began to prophesy in this same year
- The **Book of *Micah*** can be seen as the “cliff notes” of the **Book of *Isaiah*** (we will look at Micah soon)
- The two prophets say the same things at the same time
- Most likely they knew each other

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- Look at what is going on in the region:
 - King Uzziah dies and is replaced by his son Jotham, then by his son Ahaz
 - Israel is very strong
 - Syria is rising in power
 - The Assyrian Empire is being formed and gaining strength
- The basic question is: who is going to rule and control in the region?
- As a rule a king sits upon a throne
- In his vision *Isaiah* sees God as the greatest king of the world sitting on His throne
- *Isaiah* sees this in a vision while visiting the temple
- As we will see later, *Isaiah* spent a lot of time in the temple

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 6:2-3**

- To Isaiah, Yahweh is holy
- The Hebrew word qadash means to be “set apart”, “distinct”, “different,” “consecrated”
- He is not like the kings of the earth
- He is not like other gods
- He is thrice holy (perfection), completely unique and set apart
- He is the Yahweh of armies and the whole land is full of His glory

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 6:4-5**

- In his vision *Isaiah* sees God as the Almighty King
- He understands that **none** of the **regional kings** will be able to save the people
- The only king to save them is the one who controls the universe, and that is **the LORD of hosts**
- As discussed earlier, the word “host” is an old English word for “army”
- This is not the modern mechanized armies wearing camouflaged fatigues

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- Think of the “legions” of fighting men of *Israel* at that time
- On the other hand, God’s warriors are the “angelic forces”
- One angel could wipe out the entire Assyrian army
- Imagine the massive power of this force
- This was a massive military force beyond anything one could imagine
- As we will see, it will take only one angel to wipe out the Assyrian army

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- Remember what Jesus says to Peter in the Garden of *Gethsemane* (**Mt 26:50-53***₁)
- God is the one who is in power, the real king of the land, the one who is really in control
- So you really want to obey His laws

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- Look at the first Pentecost where Peter responds to the crowd that they should repent and be baptized (**Acts 2:37-41***₂)
- So here in *Isaiah* an angel takes a fiery coal and purifies his lips
- *Isaiah* is being called to go out and preach the “word of God”
- *Isaiah’s* words found in **Is 6:7** *₃ appear in the liturgical text of many ancient liturgies in association with Holy Communion

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 6:6-7**

- *Isaiah* says that what he has seen is beyond understanding
- He, a wicked sinner, has seen the King of Glory
- He says that he is unworthy, unclean and dead!
- He realizes his iniquity, inadequacy, unworthiness
- So God sends an angel to cleanse his lips and purify him of his sins so that he will be able to preach the “word of God”

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- In the old Latin Mass and the Byzantine liturgy the priest said this verse after he received communion
- It is also part of a common hymn sung at the end of communion
- These words are the fulfilment of the Eucharist

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 6:8-10**

- *Isaiah* has been purified and is now ready to go
- Later he asks the Lord how long will he have to do this
- How long will it be like this?

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 6:11-13**

- *Isaiah* is warned that only 10% of the population will remain, and God will punish them again
- This is not good news
- *Isaiah* is also told to go and preach to them **even though they will not understand**
- And, as we just saw above, the people will plug up their ears, and close their eyes less they repent so that He can heal them
- Look at **Is 30:8-13***₄ where it says the same thing
- We have heard this language in the New Testament as Jesus begins using **the parables** by making this same claim
- To understand what happens to Jesus in **Matthew's gospel**, we must understand this action in *Isaiah*

Isaiah 6 (Cont)

- God sent His people the prophets
- But the people did not listen to them and often asked them to go away because they did not want to hear God's message
- It is also found in ***Amos 7:10-17*** *₅
- God tells *Isaiah* to write His messages down because God knows that those hearing them will not remember what *Isaiah* is preaching to them because they don't want to hear them
- See **Isaiah 30:9-13**

Isaiah 30

- **Isaiah 30:9-13**

- The people have been begging for the prophet to stop preaching
- As with *Amos*, in response to the people asking for the prophets to stop preaching, God complies
- There is a basic principle throughout all of salvation history which says that when a people asked God for something over and over again, He responded to their request even though it will not be good for them
- This is very similar to a parent responding to a pleading child

Isaiah 30 (Cont)

- So now God sends *Isaiah* to prophesy to them in **parables**, which means they will not understand what he is saying
- Only a later generation will be able to look back and understand what was prophesied
- This is exactly what will happen in ***Matthew's Gospel***

Bible Writing Techniques (Cont)

- **One form of Chiasms include:**
 - A series of repetitions that brings our attention to the center

A
B
C
B'
A'

Bible Writing Techniques (Cont)

- The center is not repeated because it is the most important part
- It is like a sandwich: bread, mustard, meat, mustard, bread.
- Scrolls were written from the center outward on either side

Structure of Matthew's Gospel

Narrative about Jesus' Baptism, John the Baptist, Jesus being tested –
Mt 3-4

A. Discourse on Sermon on the Mount – Mt 5-7

Seven beatitudes/blessings

Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be known as
the children of God

Narrative on 10 Miracles – Mt 8-9

B. Discourse to the 12 Apostles on Authority - Mt 10

Narrative on the mysteries of the kingdom – Mt 11-12

**C. Discourse on the Seven Parables – Mt 13 most
important – like meat in a sandwich (bread,
mustard, meat, mustard, bread) – the parables begin
here**

Narrative on the Church, First Fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven –
Mt 14- 17

B' Discourse on the Church to the 12 Apostles – Mt 18

Narrative on the Approaching Advent of the Kingdom of Heaven – Mt
19-22

A' Discourse on the Temple Mount – 23-25

Woe to you blind guides

Woe to you brood of vipers, you children of hell

Matthew 13

- **Matthew 13:13-17** *₆

- After preaching to the people of *Israel* (*Judah* after the Exile) for three years, Jesus draws a line in the sand
- There are those who are with him and those who are against him
- He begins to speak to those who come to listen to him in parables
He returns to Peter's house in *Capernaum* where his disciples ask him why he has begun speaking in parables
- They tell Jesus that the people (and they) do not understand what he is saying

Matthew 13 (Cont)

- Jesus tells the disciples that they have been selected to receive the secrets of the Kingdom of God
- The rest of the people who had come over the previous three years to hear his message have done nothing to change their lives
- They came out of curiosity to hear him preach, then returned to their same old ways
- So, from here on, Jesus only speaks in public in parables

Matthew 13 (Cont)

- He does this so that he can continue his mission of preaching the word of God but the people will no longer understand what he is saying
- This fulfills what they have been asking for, and that is that they are not really interested, or listening, to what Jesus is saying
- Like at the time of *Isaiah*, the people of *Israel* have been sent a great prophet who is God himself, and, like in the days of *Isaiah*, they are not interested

Matthew 13 (Cont)

- Yet, as before, a small remnant (his disciples) heard his message and followed him while the masses went about as if they had heard nothing
- Father Sebastian ended this section by calling all of us to be courageous and go out and teach the Gospel even though the majority of your friends will think that you are crazy
- Keep preaching the word of God and let Him take care of the rest
- **Returning to Isaiah 7**

Isaiah 7

Isaiah 7

- **Isaiah 7:1-7**

- The major kings are listed to set the historical setting
- The “House of *David*” here refers to the “House of *Ahaz*”
- A “firebrand” is a stick that is used to stoke the logs or coals in a fire causing it to burn down until it is eventually thrown into the fire and consumed
- They are things that will eventually disappear
- So *Isaiah* is saying that, like a firebrand, those kings will eventually disappear
- The son of *Tabeel* *is the name of an unknown person

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- *Assyria* is rising in power and begins moving over the Fertile crescent
- *Syria*, attempting to hold *Assyria* from entering the area, makes a treaty with Israel and hopes to entice *Judah* into joining them
- They also seek help from *Egypt* as well
- But King *Ahaz* of *Judea* decides not to go along with this plan
- So *Syria* and *Israel* decide to attack *Judah*, overthrow King *Ahaz* and put their own king (the son of *Tabeel*) on the throne who will join with them in this venture

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:8-9**

- The Lord, through *Isaiah*, is saying that this attack against *Jerusalem* is not going to work
- Unfortunately, *Ahaz* is, first of all, a pagan who does not trust in the God of *Israel* to keep him on the throne
- He also does not trust this proposed treaty with *Israel* and *Syria*, so they decide to attack and remove him from office
- God sends *Isaiah* to King *Ahaz* to tell him that *Israel* and *Syria* are not going to last
- God tells him not to worry about them, but instead to trust in Him

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- God reminds *Ahaz* that these two nations are mere firebrands who will soon be thrown into the fire and destroyed
- Unfortunately, *Ahaz* does not believe this message nor trust in the Lord

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:10-12**

- God speaks to King *Ahaz* through the prophet *Isaiah* and tells him to ask for anything as a sign that he will remain on the throne as long as he is faithful to *Yahweh*
- *Ahaz* feigns piety by quoting from **Deuteronomy** where it says, “you shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (**Du 6:16***)
- But we know that he is a pagan and believes that *Yahweh* is just one of the many gods in the pantheon
- So he feigns piety by saying, “I will not ask a sign from *Yahweh*”

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:13-14**

- God decides to give *Ahaz* a sign anyway
- The sign that God gives to him is:
 - A young woman in his harem will bear him a child and name him *Immanuel** which means “God is with us”
 - That term is a major theme in the Old Testament, especially in the Exodus
 - If God is with you, no one can be against you or conquer you
 - So God is telling Isaiah to tell Ahaz that if he is a faithful monotheist and trusts in him as David did, he will remain on his throne and have no fear that anyone will overthrow him
 - This should have been a reminder to **2nd Samuel 7** * which established the Davidic dynasty which will live forever

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:15**

- He will eat curds and honey means that he will have reached the age of reason
- At that point the child will know the difference between good and evil

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:16-17**

- Historical context

- Ahaz is on the throne in Jerusalem as a son of David
- He will fulfill **2nd Samuel 7** if he remains faithful and his son will be next on the throne
- But the promise to David was conditional because David had many wives and many sons and grandsons
- So the promise of **2nd Samuel 7** is absolute to David, but conditional on his sons in that they must remain faithful to Yahweh
- If not, God can simply skip over to another faithful son in the line of David
- Remaining faithful is predicated on remaining a monotheist and, thus, only worshipping Yahweh, the one true God

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- We know that Ahaz is not faithful because he is a polytheist
- Since he is not faithful, he has a dilemma concerning what he is going to do
- Isaiah tells him to choose a sign from Yahweh
- He refuses, so Isaiah gives him the sign that God is with him
- He promises that by the time the child reaches the age of reason the two kingdoms of the north will be decimated
- Ahaz has been given a promise from Yahweh even though he refuses to trust in Yahweh
- How will they be destroyed?
- The king of Assyria will destroy them both

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:18-22**

- The result of this is that the land will be decimated and the people will be taken off into exile
- But there will be some “left behind” who will live off the land and be fruitful again
- But in the interim the population will be significantly decimated

Isaiah 7 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 7:23-25**

- The land will no longer be cultivated
- So the decimated culture will return to a nomadic culture
- Curds and honey are part of the diet of a nomad
- Here we see a reference to “a land of milk and honey”
- What happens is that the *Assyrians* will attack from the north and *Egypt* from the south
- At the conclusion of these battles there will be little left in the region
- The houses in the cities will be destroyed but there will be a portion of the population left behind

Isaiah 8

Isaiah 8

- **Isaiah 8:1-4**

- The prophetess is *Isaiah's* wife
- Here the Lord gives *Isaiah* another sign
- He tells him that by the time his newborn son is old enough to call out to his mother and father, *Damascus* and *Samaria* will be destroyed
- Notice that he mentions the capital cities in reference to the two regions
- The Lord promises that this will happen very fast, and all that *Isaiah* has to do is wait for it
- We will see how the actions of King *Ahaz* will cause this event to happen
- **Let us briefly review the historical setting from 2nd Kings 15-18:16) which we looked at earlier before we continue with Isaiah 8**

2nd Kings 15-18

2nd Kings 15

- As we saw earlier, *Uzziah* begins to reign in *Judah* until he acquired leprosy and had to share his reign with his son *Jotham* as ***Al bayith***
- Meanwhile, after a series of kings, *Pekah* became king of *Israel* and will preside over the *Assyrian Exile of Israel*
- *Assyria* rising to power and flowing down the fertile crescent to hammer *Syria*
- *Israel* and *Syria* joining forces to hold off the *Assyrians* and seeking a further union with *Judah* and *Egypt*
- *Jotham* is succeeded by the very pagan King *Ahaz* in *Judah*

2nd Kings 16

- King *Ahaz* refused to join them resulting in their decision to attack *Jerusalem*
 - According to ***Isaiah 7*** they plan to replace King *Ahaz* with the son of *Tabeel*
 - God tells *Ahaz* via *Isaiah* that if he trusts God all will be well for *Judah*
- But *Ahaz* does not trust in God and becomes a vassal of *Assyria* and puts his trust in their gods
- *Ahaz*, ruling as a pagan, seeks security from King *Tiglath-pileser III* of *Assyria* by paying him tribute
 - By his actions he is implying that he is the son of *Tiglath-pileser III* and he calls on him to come and rescue him

2nd Kings 16 (Cont)

- Taking *Judah's* money, the *Assyrians* destroy the *Syrian* capital of *Damascus*
- Once *Syria* is defeated and *Judah* is a vassal state, the *Assyrians* decide to go after *Israel*
- King *Ahaz* dies and is followed by his son *Hezekiah*, who is a good king after the ways of *David*

2nd Kings 17

- Initially King *Hoshea* of *Israel* pays tribute to *Assyria*
- Then the king decides to join forces with *Egypt* and stops his tribute payments to *Assyria*
- First the *Assyrians* capture *Israel* and assimilate the people from five regions of *Assyria* along with their respective pagan religions into Israel
- At the same time they exile most of the people from the land of Israel into the Assyrian empire
- This is the foundation for what will later be known as the *Samaritans*

2nd Kings 18

- **2nd Kings 18:1-5**

- *Hoshea* is king in *Israel* when *Hezekiah* comes to the throne in *Judah*
- He is the first king of *Judah* who fully complies with what is right in the eyes of the Lord according to *David*
- He removed the high places, breaks down the pillars, and cuts down the *Asherah*
- Next, we see something new – the Bronze Serpent from **Nu 21***⁷ had been turned into a pagan idol
- It appears that the people had begun worshipping the *Nehushtan* (the serpent god) and were burning incense to it

2nd Kings 18 (Cont)

- **2nd Kings 18: 6-8**

- Unlike his father, *Ahaz*, *Hezekiah* refuses to pay taxes to the King of *Assyria*
- He “would not serve him”
- Then he goes out and attacks the *Philistines* and retakes land that had formally be captured by King *David*
- This is pretty impressive stuff
- Do you think that the *Assyrians*, the most powerful force in the empire, will accept this?
- No way!

2nd Kings 18 (Cont)

- **2nd Kings 18:9-16**

- Reverting back to *Israel*, we are reminded that *Assyria* has captured *Israel* and taken most of the people into exile
- Then the *Assyrians* move south and capture most of the cities of *Judah* and demand *Judah* to pay tribute
- *Hezekiah*, after an initial act of boldness, becomes fearful and gives *Assyria* all the silver and gold he could find in the temple and in the king's treasury
- **Now let's turn back to Isaiah 8:5-22**