

## Chapter 29 Isaiah 1-6

### Isaiah's Vision of the Holy One of Israel

*“‘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.’”* Isaiah 6:5

The prophets spoke with holy boldness. They were capable of delivering their message with blunt force trauma. “For the Lord has spoken” had the impact of a hammer on a nail. They were not practitioners of subtle indirection. There was no middle ground.

The prophets echo the alternative set down by Moses: “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you and life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life...” (Dt 30:19-20). They are in line with Joshua when he said, “...Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” Choose either the foreign gods in whose land you are living or choose Yahweh. Joshua left no doubt as to where he stood, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15).

The prophets are known for pressing the question, forcing the issue, calling for a decision. They were not known for their diplomacy and their ability to appease all sides. They did not negotiate settlements and mediate solutions, they demanded decisive action. Their mission was to boldly clarify the alternatives, remove all doubt as to what was at stake, and challenge people to choose Yahweh. Their message was imperative and their call categorical. People's feelings mattered to them less, far less, than people's eternal destiny. The fear of God mattered to them more, far more, than the fear of man. The prophets believed in the wisdom of the Proverb that says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe” (Prov 29:25).

Martin Luther reminds us that the work of the prophet continues in the life of the church. He argued for a clear, unambiguous assertion of biblical truth. “To take no pleasure in assertions,” declared Luther, “is not the mark of a Christian heart; indeed one must delight in assertions to be a Christian at all.” Luther contended that Christians are to assert the truth declared in the Sacred Scriptures, not their opinions. “By *assertion* I mean staunchly holding your ground, stating your position, confessing it, defending it and persevering in it unvanquished” (The Bondage of the Will, p.66-70). In saying this, Luther echoed the apostle Paul's motivation, “Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade people. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience...We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:11, 20). We belong to this God-fearing tradition that seeks to stand firm in the faith. We identify with the prophets and “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).

Far from diminishing the work of the prophets, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasized their importance. As the apostle Peter affirmed, “we have the word of the prophets made more

certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:19-21). Isaiah's vision was not a vague dream of his own imagination but a vivid declaration of God's own inspiration.

If given the opportunity the prophets prove themselves indispensable to strengthening our relationship to Christ. Their passion for God and advocacy of holiness, righteousness, and justice is a powerful antidote to the prevailing passions of our age. Their testimony means even more in the light of the Gospel of Christ, for they not only foreshadow the message of Jesus, they also deepen our awareness of God's Kingdom work. It is sobering for those who desire to stay in the story to realize that the prophets were always "insiders" with God, but invariably "outsiders" among the people of God. They were "voices in the wilderness" calling people back to God. If we find their message difficult it may not be because of foreign sounding place names and unfamiliar metaphors, but because we are not as close to Jesus as the prophets were. Thankfully, the opposite is also true. If we find ourselves identifying with the prophets and resonating with their message we will draw strength and inspiration from their passion for God. We will want their vision of Christ to become our vision of Christ.

### **"Come, let us reason together"**

Everything about the prophet Isaiah was impressive. The prophets who preceded him, from Elijah to Hosea, would have commended him for his devotion to the revelation he received, his grasp of Salvation history, his vision of Israel's place among the nations, his fearless denunciation of Judah's meaningless religion, and his prophecy of the coming Messiah. Amos would have agreed with his call for social justice and Hosea would have endorsed his description of God's love. All that the prophets had said was boldly reaffirmed by Isaiah and set in the context of the most thorough-going prophecy of the coming Messiah.

Even the length of his ministry was impressive. He served over fifty years from the death of Uzziah (740), through the reigns of Jotham (740-732), Ahaz (732-716), and Hezekiah (716-687). Judah's kings died off but Isaiah's King reigns forever. From the beginning of his ministry, Isaiah "saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple" (6:1). He held no stock in Judah's human leaders but invested all of his confidence and hope in Yahweh. "For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king, it is he who will save us" (33:22). Over against the political intrigues and the military alliances, Isaiah kept pointing the people to God. "This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel," declared Isaiah, "I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King" (43:14-15).

Isaiah took Judah to court on behalf of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. Creation was his courtroom. "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth!" He began his case with a collage of images depicting the sorry state of the people of God. Isaiah found a startling contrast between divine endowment and human depravity: dearly loved children gone bad; a set apart, holy nation

corrupt to the core; a redeemed, free people burdened with guilt; descendants of Abraham descended into evil; and the children of God sold out to corruption. Do you get the picture? “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me” (1:2).

The more we are aware of God’s great salvation history story the greater our appreciation for all that Yahweh did to set apart the people of God. How could God have done anything more for Israel than he had already done? Nevertheless they rebelled. They rejected his love and mercy. They saw his law as a burden, not a blessing. They turned the sacrifice of redemption into an empty ritual.

As far as the prophet was concerned, honoring God was straightforward, but God’s own people dishonored God. “The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand....They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him” (1:3). The prophet was bewildered, amazed, how could this be? And it was not for lack of punishment and discipline. Sin had ruined them. They had received the penalty for their actions. “From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there was no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil” (1:6). In their rebellion they had become utterly devastated and no more worth saving than Sodom and Gomorrah. Nevertheless God’s mercy prevailed and there was still time for the word of the Lord to work.

What follows is an unexpected contrast between a picture of utter desolation (1:5-9) and a picture of religion-as-usual (1:10-15). From the preceding description of rebellion and depravity we might think that nobody was going to church. Prayer services were canceled, offerings were down, and no one was singing in the choir. On the contrary, religion was thriving. Temple services were packed and the offerings were great. High holy days were popular. The usual indicators that the people used to determine spiritual health were all positive. The numbers looked good. Yet appearances were deceiving. Outward religious performance concealed a deep-seated spiritual disease. Ostentatious religiosity covered-up blatant disobedience and empty piety replaced devotion to God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer opposed religious Christianity, and his critique exposed the underlying godlessness of religion in his day. Religion, he contended, became a self-justifying tool for ego-centered individualism, and nothing more than an attempt for self-salvation and self-expression. It was a way of meriting God’s favor and impressing people with one’s piety. This amounted to using God to satisfy selfish needs, placate insecurities, and domesticate the living God. Impressive church services and plenty of high energy ministry programs may do little for drawing people to God and serving Jesus.

The prophet’s language of denunciation is strong and passionate and calls into question our practices, our offerings and our traditions. Are we going through the motions and practicing a religion that satisfies us, but not God? Is it a matter of religion-as-usual? Are we open to the Spirit of God? Given the Gospel and the reality of the risen Lord we have no excuse for indifference or resistance to the will of God. The agenda for renewal is explicitly clear. The

prescription is spelled out in simple verbs: “*Stop* doing wrong, *learn* to do right! *Seek* justice, *encourage* the oppressed. *Defend* the cause of the fatherless, *plead* the cause of the widow” (1:16-17).

How does Isaiah’s situation line up with our own? Does the church today look like Judah during Isaiah’s day, scattered, weak, soft on justice and righteousness, yet into sexy religion? Are we like Judah, inwardly bloody, broken, and beaten, but outwardly big and bold? We value recreational spirituality, but loving and obeying God wholeheartedly is foreign to us.

The Lord presented his case against his people in the courtroom of creation for all to see. There were no secrets. Undoubtedly the kings of Judah and the priests of Israel would have liked Isaiah to have kept quiet, but he could not, he was under orders. The words, “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord,” remind us of this courtroom drama. The Lord God didn’t want to issue a guilty verdict. He wanted to pardon, not condemn. He wanted to cleanse, not convict. Scarlet and red are the colors of blood-guilt, snow and wool are naturally white. God was more than able to take care of the stain if they were willing to be cleansed.

Repentance and redemption are the key to spiritual renewal. We feel we need a little affirmation and alteration but God says we need atonement and transformation. What we want is acceptance and approval, but what we need is deliverance. The last thing we need is to be told we are okay, or that we are suffering from a problem of self-esteem or boredom. We may be helped by exploring our past, but we are redeemed when we accept the mystery of Christ’s atoning death on the cross. Whatever insight we could have from difficult childhood experiences or dysfunctional family situations pales in significance to our understanding that God in Christ died for us to turn away the judgment of God, which we deserve, and liberate us from the bondage of sin and death.

## **Meaningless Offerings**

We are introduced to the theme and thrust of Isaiah’s ministry before we meet the prophet himself. We understand the tenor and tone of the prophet’s challenge before Isaiah tells the story of his call.

Through the prophet, God pronounced a series of “woes” that graphically portrayed the reasons for his judgment. “Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you alone live in the land...Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine...Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and wickedness as with cart ropes, to those who say, ‘Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it’” (5:8-19). They continued to speak of the “plan” of God with an air of religious sincerity but it was all so much empty sentimentality. They had the language, but not the life. “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.” The emergent picture is of a decadent, self-indulgent, materialistic culture that did not know God. “They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine,” observed the prophet, “but they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands. Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding...(5:8-20).

## Uzzah's Unholiness

Isaiah was called by Yahweh to deliver a message of blistering judgment and long-distant hope. There was nothing in his plea that appealed to the masses; nothing in his wisdom that resonated with the wisdom of his day. Isaiah could say with the apostle Paul, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (2 Cor 2:4-5).

The description of Isaiah's call begins with the significant words, "In the year that King Uzziah died..." Uzziah's reign is described in 2 Kings 15:1-7 and 2 Chronicles 26. He began his reign at the age of sixteen and ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. We are told that he did what was "right in the eyes of the Lord," but he did not remove the high places (2 Ki 15:3). Under his administration idolatry continued and the blending of Israel's way of life with the surrounding cultures persisted. Nevertheless, "as long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success" and "his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful" (2 Chron 26:5,8). We know more about Uzziah (also known as Azariah) than we do about many of Judah's other kings. With God's blessing and a well-trained, well-equipped army, he was militarily successful. He built up the fortifications of Jerusalem, improved irrigation and developed agriculture "for he loved the soil" (2 Chron 26:10). "His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful" (26:15). But as with so many before and after, Uzziah's God-given success led to pride, not gratitude.

One particular incident highlighted his pride. Instead of responding in humility to God's blessing, Uzziah crossed a boundary and assumed priestly authority when he "entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense" (26:16). Azariah the priest, along with eighty other "courageous" priests of the Lord confronted the king in the temple. "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God" (26:18). Judah's highly successful king was enraged by the priestly rebuke. Who were they to say that he couldn't burn incense in the temple? It was then that God intervened unexpectedly. "While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead." Immediately he was ushered out of the temple by Azariah the chief priest. It was a violation of the law for such a person to be in the temple (Lev 14). It appears that the angry king instantly became a compliant patient. "Indeed, he was eager to leave, because the Lord had afflicted him." Overnight, Judah's popular king was transformed into a contaminated and isolated recluse. Not only was he excluded from the temple, but from the palace as well. He had to live in a separate house and Jotham his son assumed political leadership. We don't know how long Uzziah lived this way, but he lived in isolation until his death.

The tragic spectacle of Uzziah in the temple raging against the priests, and then defiled by leprosy, is in marked contrast to Isaiah's dramatic vision of Judah's true king, the Lord Almighty. By linking his vision to the death of Uzziah, Isaiah is proclaiming the truth that the demise of Judah's king has nothing to do with Israel's true leadership and destiny. Isaiah was certainly not one for anxiously looking to Judah's new king Jotham for hope. Whether it was

Uzziah's funeral or Jotham's coronation, the prophet was God-centered.

"I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple." All true visions are by definition God-focused, God-inspired. This is not the *seeing* that limits God to a physical manifestation (1 Jn 4:12, "No one has seen God..."). This is the *seeing* that, through the eyes of faith, beholds the reality of God. The prophet's description is not a reflection of his own imagination, but the revelation of God's inspiration. Hope is defined not by the next administration or by a new agenda or by a new enthusiasm, but by true worship, repentance, forgiveness and salvation. We would do well to limit our understanding of vision to what the Word of God reveals. The wish-dreams of the world clash with the vision of God's revelation. All action issues from the vision of God and is inspired by God.

"I saw the Lord," was Isaiah's singular testimony. May it be ours. His experience was unmerited, undeserved and unaffected by the changing circumstances of life. The apostle Paul made a comparable statement when he said, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings..." (Phil 3:10). We were not meant to envy these testimonies, as if they were beyond us. We, too, should be able to say, "I saw the Lord..." As King David said, "I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Ps 16:8; Acts 2:25).

Isaiah never exposes the mystery of God. He does not reveal to us anything that we didn't already know about the character and action of God, but his prophecy reminds us of the transcendent majesty and universal sovereignty of the Lord God Almighty. Isaiah was not a cult leader who had secret insights into the divine being. On the contrary, he was a prophet who was filled with a sense of the majesty and holiness of God. He described the scene, but does not try to exegete the center. The Lord is on his throne, high and exalted. That is enough for Isaiah, and it is enough for us. The seraphs are attendants, heavenly beings, literally the "burning ones", who hasten to do God's bidding. Their covered faces shun all self-attention. Their covered feet refuse all self-direction, and their winged motions accept only God's directions. They offer up a continuous hymn of praise and adoration, singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah meant for us to feel the dynamic of this worship scene. This was not a news report to be documented but true worship to be experienced. Surrounded by pulsating sound and an awe-inspiring spectacle, Isaiah was confronted with his true self and the mess of the human condition.

We long for a true extra-sensory experience, filled with energy and power, capable of inspiring the soul and filling the mind and heart with glory. This is what makes the idols of the world so appealing, because they tap into our longings and our God-given capacities, but they offer a contrived excitement—a counterfeit glory. As with Aaron's Golden Calf experience, they cater to self-indulgence, focusing us on our feelings and our lusts. The world seeks to separate our bodies and souls, catering to our sin-induced urges and destroying our true identities. God seeks to fulfill us by making us whole, satisfying our deepest longings and restoring our true identities.

At the very core of Isaiah's worship experience was not a nameless, wordless spirituality, but a

resounding, inexhaustible, soul-inspiring, mind-comprehending message. “In an unholy place, Isaiah was plunged into the holy” (Peterson, *The Way of Jesus*, 133). “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” The meaning behind the word *holy* conveys two key ideas, “brightness” and “separatedness” (Motyer, p.77). God is Holy and all other holiness is contingent on his holiness. God is absolutely pure and utterly unique, dwelling in “unapproachable light” (1 Tim 6:16), and living in total and unique moral majesty. The threefold repetition accentuates the superlative, describes without controlling, and defines without limiting. For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the whole earth is full of his glory. As the apostle Paul said, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (Rom 1:20).

### “Woe to me”

Isaiah was fully alive to the glory of God, “my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty,” but instead of feeling fulfilled he felt undone. “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” (6:5). In the previous chapter Isaiah announced six “woes” covering the gamut of sin, including greed, sloth, drunkenness, partying, deceit, and injustice, but he reserved the seventh woe for himself. When compared to others Isaiah may not have exploited the poor, indulged in sexual immorality, or engaged in self-righteous rhetoric, but when compared to God he knew he didn’t have a moral leg to stand on. There is indeed a terrible moral difference between a genocidal war criminal and first grade T-ball player, but before God, even the little boy faces a chasm far too vast for his own justification. Both the war criminal and the little boy require God’s mercy and grace. “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (64:6).

Isaiah exclaimed, “I am ruined!” The root word for “ruined” means “to be silent.” It is the silence that follows disaster or death, when those struck cannot even find words to express their grief. We were meant to feel the agonizing contrast between the never-ending song of praise and Isaiah’s inability to speak. In his present state he has no voice. He’s excluded from all participation by his own sin. The seventh woe reflects an awakened conscience. A repentant Isaiah confessed, “For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips...” Without cleansing how can these deceitful, lying, flattering lips praise God (Ps 12:3; 17:1; 31:18). This painful inability to praise God because of sin was traumatic for Isaiah. People try hard to adjust to this silent world by anesthetizing their souls with loud distractions, religious activity, and busyness. They may try to live vicariously through the spiritual lives of others, or put the voice of God on mute and pull away from worship altogether, claiming that it has become boring. Try as they might they don’t get anything out of the preached Word or the sung Word or the prayed Word. It never occurs to them that the problem lies within themselves. “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a person of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.” It could very well be that it is this sense of silence, this feeling of being ruined, this experience of grief so great that there is nothing more to say, that has led to the popular idea that true spirituality is silent. There are no words to express a feeling that remains undefined and inexplicable. Thus,

what Isaiah felt in despair is now extolled as a virtue (5:20).

Since the seraphs only move at the command of God, the initiative for Isaiah's reconciliation belonged to God. The symbolism of the heavenly messenger removing a hot coal from the altar and touching the lips of Isaiah represented God's provision for forgiveness and redemption. By God's grace the atoning sacrifice on the altar was effectively applied to Isaiah. The hot coal symbolized the atonement, propitiation and satisfaction, not only required by God but provided by God (Motyer, p.78). For the Christian, this symbolism points to the Cross. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Isaiah's vision sketches in a few quick strokes, symbols that point to the meaning and momentum of God's salvation history drama.

No sooner was the atonement applied, but Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Service was not imposed, but invited. The opportunity was presented as a privilege, not a duty. The apostles found in this expression an indication of the triune God (Jn 12:41; Acts 28:25; Motyer, p.78). Isaiah was now free to speak and he freely did. He was no longer ruined; no longer silenced. He could join King David in exclaiming, "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips" (Ps 34:1). "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you" (Ps 63:3).

### **"Here am I, Send me!"**

Isaiah didn't question or debate, his debt of love yielded an immediate and enthusiastic response to the Lord, "Here am I. Send me!" The prophet's glad surrender, however, was to be in marked contrast to the people's calloused rejection of the Word of God. This passage implies that there are two kinds of people, those who say to God, "Here I am, send me!" and those who reject the Word of God. There are those who hear and respond and those who hear and don't respond. In the later group there is nothing wrong with their hearing but there is plenty wrong with their hearts.

Isaiah was called to preach the Word to a people who heard it but refused to accept it. They threw up their impenetrable will against the Word. They hardened their hearts, closed the ears, and shut their eyes. In fact, Isaiah's calling was to reinforce their total inability to comprehend the truth of God. "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" (6:10).

How did the prophet do this? He did this by presenting the truth with such clarity, simplicity, and sincerity, that each successive refusal to respond to the grace of God made it that much more difficult for the people to receive the message. Isaiah was a straight-talking prophet who did everything he could to convince the people of the truth of God, yet because of his effectiveness, he only drove them further from the truth. According to Alec Motyer, "he faced the preacher's dilemma: if hearers are resistant to the truth, the only recourse is to tell them the truth yet again, more clearly than before. But to do this is to expose them to the risk of rejecting the truth yet again and, therefore, of increased hardness of heart. It could even be that the next rejection will

prove to be the point at which the heart is hardened beyond recovery” (p.79).

Ironically, Isaiah was criticized for his clarity and simplicity. “Who is it he is trying to teach?” asked his critics. “To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast?” In today’s theological circles, Isaiah sounded like the simple believer who embraces the reality of the Incarnation and the necessity of Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the Cross. Instead of reassigning new meanings to old words, as many modern theologians do with such words as resurrection, justification, sanctification and inspiration, Isaiah believed and proclaimed the Word of God plainly, yet boldly. His critics mocked the way he carefully developed his teaching systematically. “Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there” (28:9-10). Can you imagine dismissing the prophet Isaiah with “yada, yada”? If they did it to the prophet, I suppose we shouldn’t be surprised if they do it to evangelical teachers today.

Given such an unbelievably hard challenge, Isaiah naturally asked, “For how long, O Lord?” The answer he received was not easy! “Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, 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” (6:11). Not only did Isaiah present the truth clearly and compellingly, but he did it for over fifty years with the same discouraging result. The substance and style of his ministry of the Word was matched only by his endurance.

“Isaiah is the greatest preacher to be represented in our Scriptures. He is also our most conspicuous failure. . . .He preached powerful, eloquent, bold sermons. Nobody listened. He preached repentance and the salvation of Jerusalem and Judah. The people did not repent and were taken into exile” (Peterson, *The Jesus Way*, 140).

Isaiah said too much about hope to be written off as a prophet of despair. He never failed to proclaim hope. Isaiah spoke of the fallen oak tree as a metaphor for judgment, but he ended with a message of hope. Within the decaying stump the seedling of new growth could be found. This “holy seed” was a sign of life and a metaphor for God’s future salvation blessing (6:13). Isaiah developed this metaphor in two ways. It was a sign of the remnant of God’s people who remained faithful and true, but it was also a sign of the *One* who was to come.

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (11:1-3).

The future of salvation depended upon the ministry of this coming *One* who was destined to reveal the transcendence of God and the immediacy of his glory in a totally unexpected way. Even Isaiah did not know how the meaning of the throne of God and the sacrificial altar would come together in the Suffering Servant and the Lord of Glory. Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, but the apostles saw the Lord “lifted up” on a cross to pay the price for

our sins (Jn 3:14). Isaiah beheld the glory of God, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory,” but the apostles witnessed the glory of the crucified Christ and Risen Lord (Jn 17). Salvation depends upon the fullness of this reality. The majesty and mercy of God come together in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and coming King.