

Isaiah Chapter 6- John Karmelich

1. I'm going to be the first to admit, Isaiah Chapter 6 is just plain weird. We're going to read Isaiah as he literally gets "transported" (to use a Star Trek term) into God's throne room. He explains to us when this happened what the throne room of God looked like, who was also in there besides God Himself and what God looked like. It's hard to imagine that a God who created everything also needs a "throne room" or even has to sit on a throne chair. Remember that if we will be with God forever, He needed to create a place where we can get close to Him. I've always believed in a God that's everywhere and is aware of all things. I also believe He rules from this throne room in the sense that it's a created place for us to focus upon as we worship Him.
 - a) I said it's a strange chapter, and I've only written one paragraph so far. If you've spent any time watching Star Trek or any science fiction for that matter, it may help you as we study this chapter. I'm also aware that many Christians don't like prophecy studies as they only like to focus on how God loves us or how we're supposed to live. My wife and I shared a joke for many years, where if she can't sleep, I'd start quoting bible prophesy as that helps her to sleep. I also know some Christians who obsess over bible prophecy and spend way too much time on that topic. When I talk to a single Christian woman who want to know where to find Christian men, my advice is go to a bible prophecy conference, as you'll find a lot more men than women at such events.
 - b) To put it simply roughly 30% of the bible is predictions. That means 70% of the bible isn't predictions. We should focus our bible study time appropriately.
 - c) Before I touch Isaiah Chapter 6, let me address those of you thinking, "I've got enough on my plate to deal with. Why should I care about Isaiah's vision of God's throne room?" To start, we'll be there ourselves one day. If you're a Christian, when you enter heaven, you can't just hide in the back and ignore God's throne room. I'm convinced that in heaven all of us exist in more than three dimensions. That's how we all get close to God and all still be individuals at the same time. Consider that Jesus entered a locked room after He was resurrected. (See John 20:19). My point is the "new physical body" Jesus had is designed for the "atmosphere" of heaven and we'll have that same type of new body that won't fade with time and can last all of eternity. Again this is a strange chapter, and we're just on the first page. My point is do your best to absorb all this weird stuff as Isaiah's describing this scene, realize God wants us to know all this stuff for a reason.
 - i) To put this another way, if we can handle this chapter of Isaiah, the rest of it will be a long downhill ride from here in terms of understanding what Isaiah wants us to know about our relationship with God the Father.
2. With that speech out of my system, realize there are only 13 verses in this chapter. I thought I'd be able to take on more than one chapter in this lesson, but it's literally going to require the whole lesson to explain why Isaiah lays out all this "weird stuff" as I call it, or to use a safer biblical idea we are going to read a vision of God's throne room.
 - a) There are a few other places in the bible where one reads of God's throne room. Ezekiel 1 comes to mind as does Revelation Chapter 4. We're going to see some similarities in all of these descriptions of God's throne room as well as some differences. My "fun job" is to lay out those differences and similarities and explain why it's all there. If you think you have enough to deal with than go through all this now, realize how long eternity will be versus how long your life will be here. My point is it's worth taking some time to see what God's throne room is like as we'll be there a lot longer than we'll be here. Even if you think you'll worry about heaven when you get there, realize Isaiah and other bible writers do describe God's throne room for a reason: Not just to satisfy curiosity, but also to comprehend what is our eternal future as we'll be spending eternity in His presence ruling with Him.
 - b) If all this bores you, the good news is the chapter is more than describing the "room".

3. That leads me to the more important question, why do we get this vision of the throne room?
 - a) First clue, it's not just to tell us what it's like or what is happens there.
 - b) It's also here to tell us how and why Isaiah was called by God.
 - c) It also tells us that most people hearing Isaiah's message either won't get it or won't care.
 - d) Then it ends with the good news that despite Israel's corporate rejection of what Isaiah is called to preach in this book, God and the Israelites will win in the end.
 - i) Let me explain that one. Yes, many Israelites will die because they failed to listen to the preaching of Isaiah. Many Israelites throughout history have died horrible deaths due to prejudice, jealousy, their failure to believe Jesus is the Messiah and due to tyrants who made the Jewish people the scapegoats for other problems.
 - ii) Despite all of that, the nation of Israel will "win" one day, in that the Messiah who we Christians call Jesus will rule the world one day from the nation of Israel. Yes I believe that is literal and not figurative despite what a lot of liberal Christians will argue. By the end of this short chapter, Isaiah will argue that just as there may be a stump of a tree left from a forest fire, so a new growth comes out of the ground on a new day, so the Messiah will come to rule the world even after millenniums of a tragic history of the Jewish people.
 - e) OK, John that's pretty standard conservative Christian theology. Assume we sort of know all of that. Why should we read the whole lesson if we believe Jesus will return to rule the world one day from Israel? The answer isn't just to learn prophesy details. It is to realize that God's laid out history in advance for us so we know the end from the beginning.
4. At this point, let me give my lesson titles: "What God's throne looks like and why that matters to us Christians. My alternative title is "Understanding how Isaiah was called by God and how our own calling is similar." Don't like that one? How about "Understanding what it is God wants us to know about His eternal plan for mankind in 13 strange verses." Now have three choices. After reading the whole lesson, you can decide for yourself which one works best for you. With all that said, time to start the verse by verse commentary.
5. Isaiah Chapter 6, Verse 1: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.
 - a) The first thing I'd like you catch is that Isaiah gives a "time stamp" to this vision. Israelites didn't have a calendar like we have today. They marked their time by the years that their king of the moment reigned. Believe it or not, if I spend a few minutes talking about King Uzziah, it would help to understand the setting. The short version is he was a good king. He reigned for decades. His downfall was he wanted to expand his power by worshiping at the temple. He had leprosy the last 10 years of his life due to that mistake. My point is simply that life was about to change dramatically for the Israelites as this "good king" who has been there for many a year, is now dead and the future was uncertain for them.
 - b) I don't know how much later Isaiah put this book together in comparison to when he saw this vision. I just know Isaiah realized it was a time of uncertainty and as there's a change of leadership taking place with a new king on the throne.
 - c) Anyway it was at that time, that Isaiah either through a dream or had a "Scotty beam me up" moment where Isaiah was now standing in God's throne room. I suppose it's time for the classical definition of "heavens" as used in the bible:
 - i) The "first heaven" is the atmosphere where birds fly around.
 - ii) The "second heaven" is the stars and whatever's beyond our atmosphere.
 - iii) The "third heaven" refers to God's throne room. It can't be seen with a telescope, but it's as real as the first two heavens. Paul himself said he was also "beamed up" to this third heaven as Paul referred to it. (See 2nd Corinthians 12:2.)
 - d) Time for the tough question:. If Moses wrote that no one can see God and still live, (See Exodus 33:23), how is it that Isaiah could see God? What Moses wrote about was the idea that none of us can fully comprehend God. That applies to Isaiah as well.

- i) My point is if Isaiah saw God sitting on a throne chair that does not mean that's all there is to God. This throne room is God manifesting Himself in a way we all can relate to and get close to. That's how God can be everywhere at once and still be in this physical location of a throne room. (I told you it's a weird chapter!)
- e) Now that we got the concept that there is more to God than what we can comprehend in a throne room scene. Let's get back to the specifics of what Isaiah saw. He saw God sitting there and the train of His robe filled the temple. A robe "train" has no functional purpose. The best I can get to describe it would be like a bride's dress that was so long, it required a helper or two to carry the dress as the bride moved. The visual picture here is that God is in charge and has everything so under control, so He could sit in a judgment chair with a robe that could fill the temple.
 - i) The idea here is for us to picture the fact that the God who created everything and who rules over everything, is also so "In charge" that He can be seated at a throne chair with a robe big enough to fill the room and it's not an issue for God to either judge or "get around".
 - f) The final thing to catch from this opening word picture is how God is "high and lifted up" while in this throne room. It's a word picture of God being "above all things". Because in this room the throne chair was raised, it's showing how God is above all things.
 - g) Now that we've got a picture of Verse 1 in our heads, it's time for the even stranger word picture of Verse 2:
- 6. Verse 2: Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."
 - a) Remember how I said God's throne is "lifted up" somehow above the floor of the temple in Verse 1? Well, it's not the highest thing in this room. Above this vision of God, there were flying creatures called "seraphs". Notice the verse does not say how many there are, just that they flew above this throne room. If nothing else, it shows that Isaiah could see more than just God in this room and Isaiah had a good look around at this picture.
 - b) Before I get into describing the seraphs, let me ask a question many of you might think at this point: How do we know Isaiah didn't just eat some "bad pizza" and just had a weird dream with all of this? For starters, this vision is similar to one Ezekiel had and he lived about 100-200 years later. It's also similar to one John had and he lived roughly 800 years later. I also mentioned Paul's vision of the throne room in 2nd Corinthians 12. My point is all of these men saw similar enough visions to validate them as God inspired.
 - i) Even if all of that doesn't work for you, remember this book is full of predictions to validate Isaiah as a prophet that came true soon after his lifetime and much later in history as we'll get to in later chapters. The reason both religious Israelites as well as Christians accept the writings of Isaiah as a prophet is due to his accurate telling of history in advance. If we can trust that, we can trust this "throne room scene".
 - c) Speaking of that scene, let's return to it. In these two verses, we get a description of some sort of flying creatures that fly above God in this throne room. To state the obvious, they are not like "flies to be swatted down", but are creatures that are there to serve God. We'll get to that more in a moment.
 - d) First, I want to discuss a classical Christian debate between "seraph's" as Isaiah calls them here and "cherub's" that are discussed elsewhere in the bible. Remember I mentioned the prophesy conferences that are mostly men? Well some of them will debate endlessly over whether or not seraph's and cherub's are the same creatures or different entities. (Girls if you go to one of those conferences, you're now warned what you may get into!) Some say they are the same creatures, some argue differently. Seraph means, "burning ones" as if to say these creatures are "burning on fire" as they fly. Whether or not they're the same as the cherub's I'll leave that debate to the "professionals".

- e) Instead of speculating if seraph's are also cherub's or not, let's return to the text as Isaiah is describing them in these two verses. Each of them had six wings: Two were used to cover their face, two to cover their feet and two were used to fly. If nothing else we learn that in this throne room, one still needs "wings" in order to fly above this room, which implied the room had some sort of gravity to keep visitors to the throne room in place.
- f) Again remember what the word "seraph" means: Burning one's. Picture whatever these creatures are, they looked like they are on fire. The "burning" seems to imply that they're somehow involved in carrying out God's judgment as they were created to do whatever is His will. To understand, let's talk about what these creatures looked like.
 - i) The text says each of these creatures had six wings. Two of the wings were used to cover their faces, two to cover their feet and two to fly. Yes, again this is weird and let me speculate for a moment why they cover their faces and feet. What most commentators speculate is that even though they were created by God in order to serve Him, they realize how holy God is, and don't want to have to look at Him as He is so holy. Consider that in a few verses, we're going to read how Isaiah knew he was in the presence of a holy God and was afraid to have contact with Him.
 - ii) My point is these "burning one's" have the same type of attitude that we as created people should also have toward God. Yes we can get close to Him because He did pay the full price for our sins, but at the same time we need to honor Him as being a perfect entity that is above all that is created. Therefore even as these seraphs do not look at God due to His "perfection", so we should have the same respect when we are in His presence even though we are allowed to get close to Him.
 - iii) If all of that is true, why do they also have two wings to cover their feet? The text doesn't say, so all we can do is speculate. What I suspect is that we as people don't have the privilege of knowing where they go or how they move. It's a visual way of saying we don't know where they go. Let me put it this way: Most of us accept the idea that angels exist, yet none of us know where they came from, how they're appearing or disappearing, we just accept their existence. My point is simply this visual picture of "wings covering their feet" is designed as a sign to say we're not given the privilege of knowing where they go. In effect that's God's business as He designed these creatures to help carry out His will for our lives.
 - iv) By now you can see why I call this a weird chapter, and I'm only up to Verse 2 at this point. With that said, we can now discuss Verse 3.
- g) Verse 3 talks about what these "seraphs" (burning one's) are doing: They are speaking to one another saying "Holy, Holy, Holy" is the Lord God almighty.
 - i) First, that tells us that whatever these creatures are, they can speak and speak in a way that Isaiah can understand what they're saying.
 - ii) So why say that God is "holy" three times? Didn't Isaiah get it the first time? I'm willing to speculate along with most Christians that this is a "hint" of the trinity in that these creatures recognize the "three in one" aspect of God. Obviously Jewish scholars disagree with that, but that's how Christians see that reference. In fact we can find lots of subtle references to "three in one" all over the Old Testament, but I will spare you that study for today.
 - iii) The other point to catch here is these creatures are acknowledging God as they do fly above Him. Obviously I see it as honoring the "trinity" but the important point is they realize who God is, and how He's "above" them in rank and importance.
 - iv) Let me approach these creatures another way: Do you think God needs to hear the voices of these creatures saying how holy He is? No, God doesn't have an ego that needs reinforcement to justify what He created. The reason we as His created ones are called to praise Him is to remind ourselves that He is above all things. When we read these shouts of praise, it's to remind us how we're to respect Him as God.

7. Verse 4: At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.
- a) What Verse 4 is telling us that the sound of these "seraphs" praising God was so loud it actually caused the doorposts (entrance to that throne room) and thresholds (the entrance way into that room) to shake and be filled with smoke. (Like I keep saying, this is a weird chapter, so we just have to deal with it as we go.)
 - b) I admit as I thought about this verse I kept thinking, why would God make a throne room where the doorposts were even able to shake? Isn't God perfect enough to create a throne room that can handle loud noises? Of course. The text is written that way to remind us of the power of these seraphs in that they're not to be messed with, let alone mess with God.
 - i) All I'm saying is the place is created this way to teach us that these "burning ones" (seraphs) are powerful creatures that we as humans shouldn't mess with, let alone with God Himself.
 - c) Then we have this reference to smoke. Some see it as the sight of burning incense within the temple of God. My answer is maybe, but I also have another explanation: Just about anywhere in the bible where one reads of an appearance of God, there is usually clouds as part of that visual picture. It's the bible's way of saying just as fog makes it hard for any of us to see anything, so we can't fully comprehend God. Just as clouds make things cloudy (hard to see), so I see the smoke as saying when we're in the presence of God Himself as it is described here, we can't fully comprehend what God is like and Isaiah is trying to paint that picture for us by having a "smoke" filled room.
 - i) Let me put all of this another way: Even if my interpretation of this scene is wrong at the least I know God isn't to be messed with and this verse paints for us a visual picture that we're not to approach God lightly. Speaking of approaching God with a sense of fear, that leads us back to Isaiah who's there in that room.
8. Verse 5: "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."
- a) Time for one of my very loose translations: Picture Isaiah in that throne room speaking to God Himself. He says he's very aware he's an imperfect being and lives in an imperfect world, and now he's somehow been "beamed up" into the presence of God Himself.
 - b) The point is that Isaiah is struck with fear as he realizes he's in God's presence. The sight of these flying creatures with their loud voices scared him. The sight of God Himself with in this room and Isaiah realizing that fact literally scared the life out of Him.
 - c) The reason I'm making such a big deal about this is we as Christians need to have a strong sense of reverence as we approach God in prayer ourselves. Yes we can approach God as a loving father who cares about our lives, but at the same time we should never be casual in our relationship with Him. We still need to honor Him as the creator of our world and as one who is far above us in rank and power.
 - d) So if Isaiah thought so little of himself as a sinful man, how does God "bridge that gap" in an Old Testament word picture so that Isaiah could actually speak to God? Verse 6:
9. Verse 6: Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."
- a) To understand these verses, we need to put ourselves in the time of Isaiah. At that time, there was an altar in Jerusalem where sacrifices were made daily to God. The fire in that pit was always hot and there were always burning coals in that fire. Those burning coals were animal offerings that were still burning up. Now try to picture one of these flying creatures taking a hot coal from that fire and putting it on Isaiah's lips.
 - b) My first thought would be, "that's hot". Yet there is no reference to the temperature in the verses here. All that's implied is that Isaiah's sins were "taken away" because of that piece of coal taken from that offering. OK, there's our next bit of "weirdness" from this chapter.

- c) Let me ask this from a Christian perspective: Why didn't the text just bluntly say that God Himself will pay the price for all our sins in a time future to Isaiah? Why have this strange word picture of a piece of "live fire" touching Isaiah's tongue. Part of the answer is that this is the way Isaiah would comprehend God forgiving him of his sins as Isaiah's association of that sacrificial altar with God forgiving our sins. Like I said, in order for us to comprehend this, we have to put ourselves "in Isaiah's shoes" in this picture.
 - i) Still, why doesn't the text blatantly say God Himself will one day pay the price for our sins? Why do we in a sense have to figure that out by ourselves? The answer is we each need to realize that our imperfections are what separate us from God in the first place. It's like the old expression that we need to realize we're a sinner in the first place before we realize we need something to take away our sins.
 - ii) The biggest problem I've always had with Judaism is simply that it teaches we can be "good enough" for God by doing good works. My problem is how do we know when we're good enough? By God requiring 100% perfection to be with a perfect God forever, we can know for sure we're 100% forgiven, which is why I accept the idea of Jesus being God and paying the full price for my sins.
 - d) OK John, that's all well and good, but what does it have to do with Isaiah here? From his perspective, the only way he could approach God is for him to recall he's already forgiven of all his sins, which is what this word picture of the burning coal on his tongue means.
 - e) Let me try this one more way. If God didn't want Isaiah to be His prophet, He would not have "beamed" Isaiah up to His throne room in the first place. By this big visual picture of a hot coal on Isaiah's tongue, we can get the idea that we are forgiven of all our sins, past present and future by our trust in what God did and continues to do for us in our lives. That is what Verse 7 is saying to us that we too can be forgiven of our sins by trusting in a once and for all sacrifice of Jesus for our sins so we can approach God the Father.
10. Verse 8: 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!"
- a) Let me start by saying we're now over half way through this strange chapter, and this text is not getting any easier or less weird. This is the first we read of God speaking to Isaiah in this throne room setting.
 - i) Let me back up a moment for the simple reminder this is Chapter 6. I'm convinced that this chapter is not placed in chronological order as God called Isaiah to be His prophet before he started to write. My point is simply Isaiah started with in effect five chapters in order to get our attention of how we (collectively) are not pleasing to God based on our efforts. Now that Isaiah has gotten our attention through all of the preaching up to Chapter 6, Isaiah's pausing his God given sermon to tell us the story of how God actually called him to speak and what happened there.
 - b) To understand this text, it'd probably help to discuss for a quick moment how other bible writers reacted to being called by God to be His prophet. Moses effectively said, I can't do it as I don't speak well. (See Exodus 4:10). When God called Jeremiah, he responded that he is too young and no one will respect him. (See Jeremiah 1:6). However, Isaiah was the type of person who didn't have any fear. I picture a classroom full of kids and Isaiah has his hand raised like a kid who knows the answer to the question already. Even though he has no idea what's in store for him in the future, Isaiah volunteers to be God's spokesman despite whatever the cost will be in the future.
 - c) That of course leads to you and me. To come back to my favorite expression, I believe in Jesus, now what?" My now what for this lesson is just as Isaiah volunteered to speak on God's behalf, so God calls on us to be a witness for Him even though we have no idea of what that'll mean for our future. To trust in God is all about our willingness to serve Him despite whatever that means for our future on earth. As we'll read most people did reject what Isaiah preached, but he volunteered anyway as that's what God called him to do.

- d) So does that mean we're each called to be a prophet for God like Isaiah? Not exactly. We are told by Jesus Himself after His resurrection that we're to go into all the world and be a witness for Him in that we're to share the good news of His salvation with others and also to help others grow in our relationship with Him. That's why I write these bible lessons. I pray they inspire all of us to use our lives for the greatest purpose possible which is to tell others of the love of God and He will judge us based on His laws and the only way to be perfectly forgiven of sins is to accept His perfect payment for our sins. That's living the Christian life in a few sentences. Meanwhile, we left Isaiah back at God's throne room yelling "pick me, I'll volunteer for this assignment" not knowing what that'll cost Him.
 - e) So you know, Jewish tradition is that Isaiah was killed by a non-God fearing Israelite king named Manasseh who didn't want to hear Isaiah's message about trusting in God in order to have forgiveness of our sins. The book of Hebrews was probably describing how Isaiah was killed when it refers to an unnamed prophet who was "sawn in two" (Hebrews 11:37) as that text is discussing a prophet who was killed for his faith in God. My point is that to be called by God is not always a pleasant story here on earth. While Isaiah probably had no idea that to be called by God meant to suffer greatly for that role, he also realized there is no greater purpose for one's life than to be used by God to make a difference for Him.
 - f) Now that I've scared us all to death that living for Jesus is dangerous to our health, let's go back to see what God has to say to Isaiah now that he's volunteered to be His spokesman.
 - g) Before we move on to Verse 9, there is a wonderful little bit of bible trivia I'd like to point out about Verse 8. Notice that Isaiah said that the voice of the Lord said, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" What I want you to catch is both the singular and plural reference to God in that Verse. The first part of that quote says, "Who shall I send?" The second part of that quote says, "Who will go for us"? This reminds me of when God said in Genesis 1:26 of "Let us make man in our image". The point is He wasn't talking to the angels when He said, "Who will go for US". It's a hint of the trinity here in Isaiah.
11. Verse 9: He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' ¹⁰ 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."
- a) First, I want you to grasp that you're reading poetry. These verses are usually laid out in most bible in a poetic style to grasp that fact.
 - b) Stop for a second and realize what God's telling Isaiah: Despite the fact that I'm sending you to preach about Me, most of the people who hear you speak either won't care about your message or won't get it. I (God) will allow people to be so "thick headed" that they'll reject your message on sight. (As you can tell, the "weirdness" is not letting up!)
 - c) As I was studying this passage, I thought, if God wants to spend eternity with people who trust Him as their God, why would God "make them" reject this message? When it comes to the issue of "God hardening our heart", I've always looked at it like God giving us more of what we already want in the first place. As one pastor put it, "Don't go down that path in life, it's a slippery slope and it's hard to come back once you've gone that path." When I hear people tell me they can't help doing this or that sinful thing, I believe them as God's given them over to what they want to do in the first place. Is God in the miracle business of rescuing people from bad choices? Of course, we'll all living proof of that.
 - i) However, most people get so comfortable in the lifestyle choices they've made that they don't want to change their lifestyle. That's what God's trying to communicate to Isaiah in these verses. Can God soften people's hearts so that they want to hear about His plan of salvation? Of course, I pray for people regularly that their heart be open to His message. Remember that it's not our ability to be a great presenter that leads others to Jesus, it's God Himself softening some people's hearts that they then can accept God's message of salvation.

- d) My point of that little speech is to realize that if we spend time telling others about Jesus or help others to grow in their relationship with Jesus, we have to accept the fact that like Isaiah, most people will reject that message. Realize these verses of Isaiah are quoted in the New Testament a few times. (See Matthew 13:15 and Acts 28:27). Therefore, we're to realize this message of "most people won't want to hear what you have to say" isn't just for Isaiah, it's for us too as we're called to make a difference for Jesus.
 - e) Now let's think about this message from Isaiah's perspective. He just raised his hand to volunteer to speak on God's behalf, and God wants to warn him that just because he did volunteer means that the job will be easy or that people will listen to Him. Consider how hard the rest of Isaiah's life is going to be with the fact that most people will reject God's plan of salvation. So why is that? In most cases people want to prove their worth to God or else just want to live however they want to without having to use their lives to make a difference for God in the first place. That's why the Gospel message is rejected so much.
 - f) In spite of this, God's always looking for volunteers like you and me to raise our hands as if to say "Send me, despite the consequences, despite the rejection we'd have to face, there is no greater purpose we can have in life than to be used by God for His glory. Therefore I encourage all of us to daily raise our hand to volunteer to do whatever God's calls us to do no matter the cost. I guarantee that if we offer ourselves to God that way, He loves to answer that prayer as we're putting our lives in His hands to be used His way!
 - g) Enough preaching on that point, let's get back to Isaiah:
12. Verse 11: Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, ¹² until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken.
- a) If someone ordered us to go preach a message and the person who gave us that order told us that our audience wouldn't accept that message, a natural question we'd ask the person who gave us that order is "How long will they reject our message?" Now if God's the one who said no one will listen to us, we'd all the more wonder how long would we have say that message? That's what we have Isaiah asking here.
 - b) God's answer had to scare the living daylights out of Isaiah. God's response is they won't listen until Jerusalem is a ghost town and everything around the city is ruined.
 - c) Ask yourself if you'd be anxious to preach the gospel and do so, until your hometown is in ruins and everything around it? Would you be excited to preach on God's behalf? Yet that is what God's telling Isaiah to do here.
 - d) Remember when I said earlier that to volunteer to be spokesperson for God usually comes with a high price tag? Isaiah is just told that the town where he lives and everyone living in that town will be killed or taken away captive. That had to discourage Isaiah from any desire to go further. I'm sure that Isaiah had to digest that fact before he even began what he said back in Chapter 1 of this book.
 - e) Now for the tougher question: Why would God call Isaiah to preach his message if God's aware in advance it will be rejected? On a similar vein, why would God call you and I to go be a witness for Him knowing that most people will reject the free gift of salvation by trusting Jesus for the complete payment of our sins? OK, once again why is that?
 - i) The answer is so people don't have an excuse. They can't say we didn't know any better. They can't say no one warned us. One has to remember that God's doing whatever He can to draw the people He's called to draw close to Him and live as He desires we live. When anyone chooses to reject Him, there's an eternal price to pay for that rejection. The role of Isaiah as well as you and me is to be that witness despite the fact that most people will reject what we have to say about Jesus.
 - f) Like I keep saying, this is a weird chapter, and the more one thinks about what it implies, the tougher this chapter gets. The good news is I only have one verse left to cover, and I'll wrap it up early as there's enough to digest in these 13 verses for one lesson.

13. Verse 13: 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."
- a) Part of the message that God called Isaiah to preach is effectively, "If any of you think that you're exempt from hearing this message of repentance and not obeying God, think again. Even if only 10% of the population survive the Babylonian siege, which again won't occur for roughly another 150 years, this will happen again.
 - b) Let me put it this way, during Isaiah's lifetime, the big threat was the Assyrian Empire. The Babylonians were a small city power base" at that time. Even after all of the damage done by the Babylonians, the Israelites didn't move back there until the rise of the Persian Empire when they permitted the Israelites to return there 70 years later.
 - c) Even after all of that, about 500 years later the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and wouldn't permit Jewish people to enter that city except for one day a year to mourn its destruction.
 - d) My point is simply that the suffering of the Jewish people is a continuous story. Today a part of the Jewish Sabbath prayer ritual is for God's protection of His people as they'll say that every generation has to face their own persecution. While I believe with all my heart that Jesus is the Messiah, I'm also equally convinced that the Israelites are still His chosen people and God still has a future redemptive plan for that nation. That's what Romans 11 is all about.
 - e) OK John, that may be all well and good, but what does all of that history have to do with these verses, let alone our lives? Glad you asked.
 - f) First keep in mind that God's still answering Isaiah's question about how long will Israel as a "nation group" reject His message of salvation that Isaiah will preach throughout this book? The answer is in Verse 13. Even though Jerusalem will be emptied of anyone who is Jewish in more than one occasion, and even though there will be efforts throughout all of human history to rid the Jewish people from Jerusalem let alone Israel, God's going to leave a remnant. Isaiah uses a cute word picture here of a tree that was cut down. When we cut down a tree, a "stump" is left. God's predicting through Isaiah that even though it will be destroyed (more than once!), God will win in the end as that's what He promised.
 - g) Think about the future of Israel this way: why do you think so many multitudes of people are so obsessed with the destruction of Israel? To state what should be obvious by now, Satan is behind that because if Israel doesn't exist as a nation, Jesus can't return there to go rule from that city and from that nation. That's why Christians are Pro-Israel. It isn't that they need to hear the Gospel message, more than other groups. The point is God Himself is "Pro-Israel" in the sense that Jesus Himself will one day rule from there.
 - h) One of the things that's always fascinated me, is that when an angel announced to Mary of her son being the Messiah, Luke 1:32 says that God will give him the throne of David. My point is simply that God's throne is in heaven. David's throne is in Jerusalem. All I'm saying is Jesus will return one day to rule the world from Jerusalem whether we like it or not. That's why Christians are supposed to be "Pro-Israel".
 - i) Now that I've got that speech out of system, let me get back to the verse. The point of all of this is simply that Isaiah needs to accept the fact that the vast majority of people won't accept Isaiah's message just as most people we as Christians tell about Jesus will reject His free gift of salvation as well. Despite the fact that Isaiah will feel like he's going to preach a message that will be rejected by most people, in effect, what choice does Isaiah have? If God calls you and I do something, are job is not to question why, but to obey. We have to accept the fact that His game plan may be harmful to our lives in this lifetime, but having eternal life with rewards based on obedience to what He's called us to do is still a greater way to live than to only try to enjoy this life while rejecting His plan of salvation. In other words, what choice does Isaiah or any of us have as Christians? We may not like what we are called to do, but in effect what choice to do we have?

14. That leads to my final question of this lesson, what specifically are we called to do?
- a) First I like to joke that few believe their gift is to take the trash out. All of us have to do what's necessary at times over and above whatever God's called us to do.
 - b) Then, I love to ask, "If money was irrelevant or you were free to do whatever you wanted to do, what would you do? What is it that people tell you, that you have a talent to do? All I'm saying is that all of us are good at something or enjoy doing something. The trick is to take that talent or gift and find a way to use it for God. My favorite example is a man I met who loves to surf and for decades he organizes a surf ministry to lead some to Jesus while he holds a surfing contest. We don't have to each have unusual ministries. All God asks of us is that we find a cause we like, get involved and do something in order to make a difference for Him. But what if money is not irrelevant or if we're stuck in a place where we can't go help like that? Then pray that God leads us down the path that He desires we do go so we can make a difference for Him. Think of it this way, do you think Isaiah was crazy about the fact he was called to preach to a nation that would reject His message? If Isaiah's willing to write the biggest book in the bible with that calling, then I think none of us as Christians have any right to tell God what He can and can't do with our life.
 - c) OK, with that not so encouraging ending, time to end this chapter. Yes we still got a long way to go in this book including big discussions about Jesus birth, ministry, death as well as His resurrection being hinted at or out rightly discussed in this book, realize that Isaiah was called in a strange vision to serve God and deliver His message to Israel and to us in spite of whatever consequences Isaiah was going to face for delivering this message.
 - d) Let me give one more ending, since I'm wrapping up early: When we get to heaven will we get to meet Isaiah? I'd say yes. If you knew you were going to meet a famous person say in a few weeks, would you read whatever book he wrote to brush up on that person? Since we'll all meet Isaiah one day that alone should encourage us to study this book, let alone all the messages he'll preach to us through the book. OK, enough weirdness for one lesson, time to wrap it up in prayer.
15. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, You've called each of us to be a witness for You. While we are not to receive a strange vision like Isaiah has in this chapter, we by studying Isaiah can learn a little of what we can expect as we'll draw close to You in heaven one day. In the meantime, help us to be willing to accept whatever role you've designed for our lives and guide us so that we can use our lives to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.