

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Isaiah 6
Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-3

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 April 28, 1991

A HOLY GOD, ISAIAH, AND ISRAEL

Introduction To put the whole Christian life in one phrase, one saying, one great and single GOAL, would be to say this: the Christian life is to **KNOW GOD** and to **MAKE HIM KNOWN**. The first part is the private and personal part. The second part is the effect that getting to know the true God HAS--it compels me to announce Him in the relationships I have with other people, and to **VISIBLY DEMONSTRATE** the realities of my getting to know Him. That is the Christian life...that's it, really. To know God and to make Him known. Someone once said,

Holiness vanishes when you talk about it, but becomes conspicuous when you live it.

Now, part of getting to know Him is to learn HOW HE IS. This learning of His attributes is what "Christian Education" is all about. We teach our children that our God indeed has certain distinct, definable and knowable characteristics. And, contrary to what our kids will encounter out in the world, the true God is NOT a lot of things which they will hear suggested that He (or She) is... "Christian Education"'s first function is to instruct and then to demonstrate in the lives of our C.E. leaders WHO God is, and HOW knowing Him impacts the believer's life.

Now let me observe two quick things here:

1. If you're thinking, "Where does giving people the Gospel fit into our C.E. program?", that is part of HOW a person gets to know God, for God cannot ultimately be known or loved without making personal USE of **redemption**. And teaching how a person is redeemed before God is the first part of knowing God, is it not?
2. Another quick observation is that "Christian Education" lasts your whole life. There is more than "enough material" to keep you interested and growing. You don't get to the end of the subject matter--in fact, I'm inclined to think that even when we're actually with Christ in every sense, "C.E." will still be happening!

Today I am beginning a little exposition over the next few weeks, if the Lord permits, on Isaiah 6. I am not sure how this series will aid you from a practical standpoint. By that, I do not mean that I expect it to be abstract or *impractical*. But just what I have said: I am unsure HOW this series will aid your daily walk with Christ--I cannot calculate what

practicalities you will take away from this. That you WILL, I have no doubt, but I am choosing not to PLAN the "applicational" sections of these sermons, just to walk you through Isaiah 6, and we shall see how the Spirit speaks to you. I hardly feel qualified to introduce this topic, and I think you will see why when we look in some detail today at that chapter. The premier subject in it is God's holiness. That is a thing that should not be overlooked or ignored from the pulpit of any Bible-believing church. In fact, sometimes I think it is the Bible-believing churches which have neglected this subject and it is a few of the Episcopal and Lutheran and Presbyterian churches who have clung to the Bible's revelation of what it means to say that "our God is a holy God."

But as you will see today, to say that God is holy is NOT to say that He cannot be known or approached, because through His only begotten Son, He has made Himself both knowable and approachable.

Let's begin to look now, at Isaiah 6...

You will probably not hear many messages from the ancient prophecy of Isaiah in your life. That is because

- a) it is in the Old Testament and Christian sermons tend to focus on N.T. passages;
- b) Isaiah was a prophet and prophecy is perhaps the most difficult kind of biblical literature to comprehend;
- c) it is a very long prophetic book, and therefore is a challenge to get a grip on the overall message He was commissioned to write down;
- d) Isaiah *himself* is not a guy we, as Christians, generally know very well--at least as we know Paul and Peter and Luke, and in the O.T. Moses and David. And so we do not tend to pour over his writing very much.

But Isaiah's book is a vast, largely unexplored goldmine of truth, and a motherlode of truth about this subject of God's perfection, His holiness.

Verse 1 Here is the tale, now, of Isaiah's calling and commissioning to become a prophet of the Most High. It started "in the year of King Uzziah's death," which would make it 758 B.C.

Isaiah wrote that in that year "he saw the Lord." Somehow he found himself carried up into heaven in a special trance-like state whereby his consciousness was no longer located on planet Earth, but in heaven itself. The Apostle John experienced the same thing when he received the Revelation when in the beginning of that book he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (a Sunday) [Rev. 1:10]. And as I have become fond of pointing out lately, I do not know exactly how that works. Its physics and physiology escape me, but it happened nonetheless.

Isaiah's first sight was God Himself, and His position was *sitting*. The person of God is at rest in heaven. He is not running or frantically racing around keeping this part and that part of the machine of the universe operating. As Isaiah viewed Him, He was sitting on a throne. That is because the first thing to comprehend about God is that He is *sovereign*. When Isaiah took up his pen to write down about this vision, he chose the Hebrew word *adonai* to refer to God. That word means LORD, not just "God". The God that Isaiah saw is the LORD, that is the King and

there are no other beings anywhere who can usurp or match His authority. What He says, is, and what He commands, happens. Period. His rule is absolute and the entire universe "revolves" around Him--I speak *qualitatively*, not scientifically (although I would not be too surprised if the word "revolved" is a good description of the astro-physics of it too!)

That throne that Isaiah saw was "lofty and exalted." It was not just some chair over in the corner. It occupies the central and foremost "spot" in the vision. In the Temple in Jerusalem, the central place was in the "holy of holies," where sat the ark of the covenant. That floorplan, designed by God you will remember, was a faint picture of this scene of which, we read, Isaiah was given a view.

It seems clear that God appeared in human form to Isaiah, since He was wearing a robe which had a train. Some of the ancient scholars thought such a picture of God was too manlike, and so actually dropped the words "the train of His robe filling the temple" from their editions of Scripture (the Septuagint, the Targum and the Vulgate). But JOHN in His Gospel says something very bold, indeed! In John 12:41 he says that it was Jesus whose glory Isaiah saw--nothing is more appropriate, for the Son of God is the *manifestation* of God to man, and Christ displayed all the attributes man needs to know about God. In fact Jesus' very name wonderfully connects with the word *JEHOVAH*.

The heavenly temple that Isaiah noticed, is that place where Jehovah manifests Himself to the angels and to the saints, even though His presence even there is veiled because no creature can fully bear His gaze. But as the old German commentator Franz Delitzsch notes:

That which veils His glory [the robe] is no less splendid, than that portion of it which is revealed.

Now the robe fills the temple and there isn't any room for anyone to stand around. The next thing Isaiah saw was in accordance with this. The *seraphim didn't* stand. They flew. Their activity was constant. They were not sitting, though their movement does not suggest exertion at all. The Hebrew says they "attended" and "flew". They were flying in a stationary way, like hovering.

Verse 2 This is the only place in Scripture where the creatures here called *seraphim* or, *seraphs* are mentioned. I cannot tell you much about them, except that in appearance they had, as Isaiah saw them, six wings, and that their activity involved a conversation BETWEEN themselves about the Lord. They didn't tower above the head of Him who sat on the throne, but they were hovering above the robe which filled the hall.

The last phrase of verse 3 brings EARTH into heaven. I mean, that even in the throneroom of *Adonai* there is an awareness of THIS planet. There, the seraphim acknowledge that on THIS planet, there is plenty of evidence for the existence and wonder and goodness of Jehovah as the true God. Many people today are fond of saying things like--(and these things have become sort of a popular *creed* today)--

"I'm not sure if there's a God or not."

"If He's there, we can't *really* know anything about Him."

"If there IS a God, well, He sure isn't involved with things on earth. Any real God wouldn't bother himself with anything

so insignificant as one single little planet..."

Well, the seraphim look down at earth and notice a lot of evidence that God made it, and that He upholds it by the word of His power. And the Scripture also tells us that when one sinner repents the angels rejoice, and that is part of the evidence of the glory of the Lord too!

Not to belabor them, but Isaiah also noticed that the seraphs covered their faces with 2 wings and their feet with 2 wings. Their faces for obvious reason for protection, and their feet in "consciousness of the depth at which the creature is below the Creator..."

Verse 3 Their address to one another is very unique! "**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord of hosts...**" No other attribute of God in the Bible is repeated three times. Nowhere do you read "Omnipresence, omnipresence, omnipresence" or "Love, love, love" or "Wrath, wrath, wrath," although those are all His attributes. His HOLINESS, His perfection, His absolute purity is the premier feature of the true God, the Living God, the Most High.

Now old Isaiah, of course, is overwhelmed by all this. Remember, Isaiah was a real man. He "put his tunic" on in the morning just like you and I... And he is just a regular guy too, despite his being called to be a prophet. And he is consumed in his transportation to heaven...

We will take it from there next week, Lordwilling. But I wonder what this does for you... I know what it does to me.

1. It rattles my view of worship.
2. It makes me reconsider the temptations I face.
3. It puts my problems in some perspective of a "bigger picture."
4. It puts me in awe of God.
5. It fascinates me...

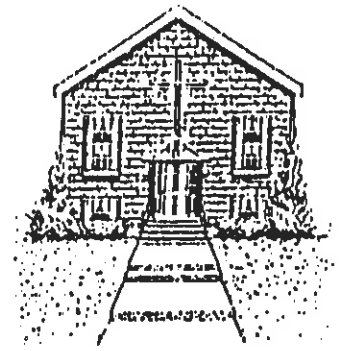
May the true God move you this week. May you be impressed with His grandeur, His majesty, His wonder and His love. May you be impressed with how *interesting* the Lord really is--indeed to even suggest that, borders on insult to Him... May you seek Him out to find Him through faith in His Son, to know Him better and to walk with Him daily.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Isaiah 6
Scripture: Isaiah 6:4-7

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 May 5, 1991

ISAIAH: RUINED AND REDEEMED

Introduction If Watergate did one thing for our country, it taught us that "things are not always as they seem." Watergate was a harsh teacher for us, instructing us that the government we like to believe exists in Washington--benevolent, above reproach and just--is not always consistent with our fantasy. I've no doubt that we have the best system on the planet, but from one standpoint, our national naivete ended that August day in 1974 when our President said on national television, "...therefore, I shall resign the Presidency, effective tomorrow at noon..."

This illustrates a universal thing about us people (or maybe its just us Americans): we are constantly being awakened out of our dreams and fantasies, and brought "back to earth" in one way or another. After WWI, our country tried the course of isolation and self-protection. That ended abruptly on December 7, 1941. In April, 1865, the southern fantasy came to screeching halt in a little Virginia village called Appomattox. We spend the better part of our days, actually, WAKING UP to one striking reality or another. I think I'm only just starting to realize this tendency in my own life...

I recently bought a couple of compact disks of some music I really liked twenty years ago, remastered, remixed and "digitized." I took them home, and while I enjoyed the tunes all over again, I was disappointed in how naive and shallow the lyrics were...this was stuff I thought was "deep" in 1970!

The point I'm pushing toward here is, as we mature we "wake up" to realities we didn't perceive when we were younger. Sometimes those realities are harsh, sometimes pleasant.

We redefine our expectations in our relationships, to avoid disappointment.

We change a few of our convictions about things, because we see that the old convictions were not all that well-informed.

We broaden our perspective as we get more information about things...

This is part of life in general for most folks, but it also is true of the Christian life. Last week I suggested to you that the whole Christian life can be summarized in the simple statement:

The Christian life is to KNOW GOD, and to MAKE HIM KNOWN.

As you and I are individually growing in faith, and in the faith, we are "redefining our expectations," "changing a few of our convictions," and "broadening our perspective." Isn't this true?

Our view of God is part of that maturing. If we are maturing in our relationship with Him, then our VIEW of Him, our UNDERSTANDING of Who He is, is also maturing. And one thing I have noticed in my reading of some of the great Christian writers, is that the more they get to know the Lord the more impressed and moved they are with His holiness. The more they grow in faith, the more ALIVE their soul becomes--even as their bodies start to die...

In the latest *Moody* magazine, Joni Eareckson Tada has a short little article in which she talks about "keeping the soul alive." Its so easy to go on, day in, day out in the Christian life, more or less on automatic, and yet to LOSE the LIFE in the "Christian LIFE." She writes,

Nothing is more mechanical than when we attempt to live a super-natural life apart from God. I've done it. You do it. And Jesus describes it in John 15:5: *For apart from Me you can't do a thing*. When we do live apart from Him, prayer becomes dull, witnessing becomes dry, and relationships sag under the weight of selfishness. Our jobs become routine...Even performing an act of kindness becomes an unpleasant duty. What's worse, our relationship to the Lord turns into a chore. In our eyes, the Lord seems to lose vitality, becoming a wooden icon in our hearts, a dusty theological figure in our minds, and a mere measuring rod for our behavior. (*Moody*, 5/91)

Instead, the true believer needs to *deepen* in His worship of a God who is pure and absolute perfection. His holiness causes us to tremble, to be sure, as we shall see in our passage today. But it also puts us in awe. It does not consume the Christian the way it does the unredeemed. It envelops us and overwhelms us, though it does not destroy us. It is a deeper *awakening* to Who our God really is, and what He is really like, that we pursue again this morning--that is why I am in Isaiah 6 these days...

Now, there are certain things we do which, I think, especially put us in closer contact with His holiness. There are activities which are uniquely *designed* (I think) to bring us close to the God we love and have only *begun* to know. As I ponder them, I feel unworthy even to list them, because they are so special...

1. The Lord's Table.
2. Water baptism.
3. Wedding vows.
4. Sexual intimacy between man and wife.
5. A good "quiet time."
6. Pure acts of service to the profoundly needy (as widows and orphans).
7. An act of sacrifice of one life for another.
8. "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (at times).

Now, I'm afraid that I'm not a very good mystic... There are probably other activities to engage in which place a person in closer touch with the holiness of God too. But there are some I can think of.

And, I am not saying that these activities are magical, with some ability to automatically transport a person to the throneroom of God. The heart must be prepared and right before Him. Its not the doing of some activity--any activity--that brings a person close to the Living God. All that's needed for that, is a prepared heart and a quiet season of prayer.

This brings us now, back to Isaiah 6 and the truly visionary experience he was having at the throne, which I am inclined to think is the throne of grace we read about in the N.T. Book of Hebrews...

Isaiah 6:4 Last week, we left it off with Isaiah's hearing the seraphs call out to one another their praise of God, and in particular, the announcement of His premier attribute (repeated three times): His holiness. And, the seraphs acknowledged the fact that of all the planets and solar systems, it is the EARTH which is "full of His glory," that is, which powerfully evidences His handiwork and presence.

We were interested in these creatures, "seraphs," though not *distracted* by them. We said that this is the only passage we have to work with in Scripture which speaks of them--and that is, perhaps, just as well. But we know they exist, and we know a little about them.

Now in verse 4, Isaiah notes that there were EFFECTS of this crying out by the seraphim. When they spoke (or sang), the support of the threshold on the porch in which Isaiah presumably was standing, *shook*. The building itself was "seized with a reverential awe throughout its whole extent, and in its deepest foundations" (commentator *F. Delitzsch*). In heaven (unlike the earth) NOTHING stands immovable when the spirits there cry out. This struck me, because on earth there are certain architectural sites which seem to us timeless. Kingdoms rise and fall, rulers come to power and die; even weather rises and calms, but still they are there. I am thinking of places like the great Pyramids in Egypt, and the giant statues on Easter island, and the Myan temples in central America or the Buddhist Temples in S.E. Asia. But in heaven no structure stands immovable when the voices of praise are heard; *let alone* the voice of the Almighty! It is an awesome place, and a place where the Christian has a future *architectural* interest! Jesus told His disciples,

In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2).

I do not understand much about the site plans or floorplans of all this, but I know this all alludes to a "higher reality" which you and I can look forward to in the future, and to which we are going to WAKE UP. And our hope in heaven is not by our imagination--it was Isaiah's vision...

The Temple then fills with smoke while the seraphim are calling out. I don't think we can fully understand what the smoke is, exactly; but it was the immediate *consequence* of the seraph's praise of God. It probably was coming from the altar--which is the heavenly ORIGINAL of the altar of incense that was found in the earthly Temple in Jerusalem.

--> Again, these are *realities* which transcend what we see today or was ever seen on earth, and they are eternal things. If they seem foreign, that just testifies to our finiteness and how far we are still below heaven. And again, I remind you that when you exercise your daily faith in Christ, and walk with Him each day and talk with Him, and ask Him for the things you need, you are in effect *transporting* yourself INTO that throneroom where the seraphim dwell and the smoke rises around the train of His robe. Your spiritual walk with Christ is, in fact, the REALEST thing that there IS in your life!

Now, there is an interesting point in regards to the *seraphim* themselves--and it comes out of the word "seraph" and out of verses 5 & 6.

Isaiah 6:5,6 Isaiah's first reaction to all this, is that he is "ruined"--*undone, doomed*. That a man cannot see God without dying is true, because to the sinner the holiness of God is a consuming fire (Is.33:14). Isaiah is literally "floored" by this vision and the things he is seeing. Even the seraphim had to veil their faces.

Isaiah says it is his LIPS that are unclean. His own voice, in the presence of these magnificent voices of the seraphim seemed to him OLD, and SHALLOW and SINFUL. He became instantly aware that his own voice echoed his sinfulness and that of his race and his countrymen.

But even though the seraphim recognize his sinfulness they do not banish him from the presence of the Lord. Instead, one of them takes a coal from the altar of incense and touches his mouth. He has to use tongs because even a seraph's hand cannot touch the vessels consecrated to God, or the sacrifices which belong to Him--of which the coals of incense are part. This burning contact is what the word seraph means: to set on fire or burn up. The seraph then pronounces Isaiah's sinful uncleanness, forgiven. It has been burned away from his mouth, symbolically, to show Isaiah, the man, that God--while absolutely holy and perfect--is a forgiving God, full of compassion.

The old German commentator, Delitzsch, goes to great ends to show in his commentary that the *seraphim* themselves were the AGENTS of God's love. Without going through all Delitzsch's arguments, it is a fascinating suggestion! The *cherubim*, whom we read about in several places in Scripture, are agents of divine wrath... But the seraphim extend and bring to bear God's compassion and lovingkindness. That is why it is them whom Isaiah sees and is dealt with by.

I think this is a clear picture--and intentionally given to us as such--of the redemption of the believer. I don't think Isaiah was just thinking of the sins of speech that he had committed. I think he was talking about his whole being, of which the mouth just *reflects*. Jesus

quoted often from Isaiah, and Isaiah often spoke of Messiah (the next chapter, for instance). Jesus and the prophecy of Isaiah are closely linked. There is a reason for that--the story of redemption; Isaiah's own, and ours, comes together in the person and work of Isaiah's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, to be sure, sins of speech--how we talk and ravage destruction with our speech--is grievous enough. But the sins of which Isaiah, Israel and US are guilty, go far deeper. And it is his whole sinfulness of which Isaiah is forgiven, by the burning of his mouth with the coal provided by the seraph. And in specific, it is any sinfulness which would disqualify Isaiah from active service to God, of which we shall consider next week, Lord-willing.

Isaiah 6:7 Do you notice that a verbal explanation is given? It is necessary. The seraph knows enough about man to know that without the Word, Isaiah may well corrupt this event later in his mind, and so the explanation is given. You and I need the Word of God in our lives to keep us on track, to keep us "calibrated" as we experience different things in our spiritual growth. Many deviations from the truth have been invented because the Word of God was neglected or handled irresponsibly .

The picture is magnificent! Jesus BECAME the sacrifice for us He endured God's judgement for us. He had to endure the full wrath and fury of His Father upon His person and spirit that WE might be forgiven. There was injury and holy satisfaction done on HIM that we might be released from our guilt! Jesus has burned away our guilt, Himself. Is He your Savior? How do you know?

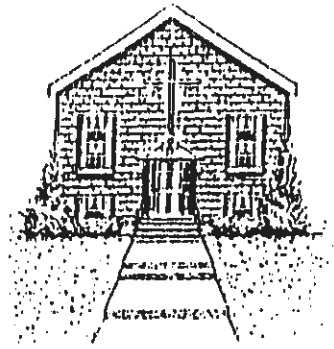
As we approach His Table, the remembrance of that transaction which He made of Himself, let us have a new and fresh joy and thankfulness.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Isaiah 6
Scripture: Hosea 3; Isaiah 6:8-13

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 May 19, 1991

IS GOD MAD AT ME?

Introduction Think with me for a minute, through the three-year ministry of Jesus. How many times can you think of when Jesus got angry? How many incidents, either by family, disciples, religious leaders, government officials, soldiers or every-day-common sinners, really made him mad?

Remember, we have a record of His ministry from four separate and independent sources. How many times did Jesus vent any anger at someone? Not very many...

And yet God has a reputation for being "ticked off." He is thought of that way almost as if that was His #1, main attribute. And in the Bible there are definitely places where the actions of men and women test the Lord's patience. Even God's own people, Israel, seemed to go from rebellion to repentance, back and forth, from one generation to another. And God would discipline His people, sometimes severely, but always with exactly the right amount of discipline.

We've read Hosea 3 in which God's relationship with Israel is paralleled by Hosea's relationship with his second wife. It is a picture of God's great love, despite the people living in spiritual prostitution. In verse 5 we read the crux of the prophecy--

"Afterward, the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days."

Now, Hosea and Isaiah lived at the same time, and today we're looking at the rest of Isaiah 6 that we started looking at three weeks back. These men saw their country in the same condition, doing the same things to distance themselves from their God, and He wants them back.

What I want to lay out today is that although a person may stray from the Lord, if that person is a believer, he cannot *disqualify* himself from God's overall plan and love. God may have to "get radical" to get the person's attention, but, God does not deal with us in judgemental wrath as He does and will with all non-believers. His discipline on believers may be as severe as is needed, but it is not the wrath that rejectors shall receive--and there are many rejectors in the world today...

Isaiah 6:8 We have Isaiah standing in the very throneroom of God, and the premier feature that permeates all there is God's absolute holiness, His purity and perfection. It is the most excellent place in the universe, a place we can hardly relate to even, and in which Isaiah could only stand in awe of. He is given as assurance that though, yes, he is a sinner, "a man of unclean lips", as he sees himself; he has been forgiven of his sins--not by the coal of incense itself, but by the atoning work of a forgiving God, who forgives sin only on the basis of blood sacrifice. And even though in TIME for Isaiah, that sacrifice by God's Son was yet future, in HEAVEN the sacrifice is timeless. Isaiah is welcomed as a redeemed child of God.

Now in verse 8, a summons goes out from God Himself for someone to go to Israel with a message. God could have dispatched an angelic creature. He could communicate in any number of ways. But He ASKS for a volunteer.

It is interesting that God refers to Himself in both the singular and in the plural. In the singular, because there is only one God; in the plural, because in the one God, there is a plurality of Persons. It is a glimpse into a truth that receives fuller revelation in the N.T. where we learn of the Triune God, made up of a single essence, and three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Isaiah responds immediately. In the very throneroom of God, alone as to human company, the question is inescapable for Isaiah. Who else would God have in mind?

Dear ones, how do you decide what God's call is to you, for doing ministry? What procedure do you use to determine what ministry-tasks God is calling out to you to engage in? A more basic question even, is, IS He calling out to you in particular? Would He be pleased to use a man or woman like you?

Well, if you are a Christian, then, on the authority of the N.T., I'm here to tell you that He definitely has something for you specifically to do... What He wants is for you to say to Him, what Isaiah said: *Here am I, send me*. Are you willing to be used of God for some purpose in ministry? I don't mean in some wishy washy, nebulous way--like you hear people say, "Well, God wants me to do good to people, and that's what I try to do every day." I mean a specific job to further His message. Are you willing to seek His will in this?

Isaiah 6:9-11 Now the message that God sent with Isaiah wasn't particularly pleasant. The message exactly met the spiritual condition of the nation of God's people. It was what they needed to hear, but it wasn't FUN.

Christianity today has screened God's truth too, to a large degree. No one wants to hear any messages about materialism, or sexual wickedness or even on basic Bible doctrine. Churches which try to emphasize the whole counsel of God are usually small churches, because most folks go to

churches which don't rattle them too much. There are some exceptions, of course, but by and large the biggest churches are the ones which don't deal with the controversial too much...

But Isaiah had a few "controversial" words to pass on. They had to do with the spiritual condition of God's people. He tells them in verse 9 that "You're not hearing Me..."

You ever had a conversation like that with someone--there's lots of talking going on, but little listening. Lots of noise but no communication. That's what God was getting from Israel. They would hear His Word but their hearts weren't hearing it. That is DEATH for a church too, and lots and lots of churches in America today are in this same, ancient spiritual condition.

Also, it is the SEEING of things as they actually ARE, that they are missing. You and I are like that too, I'm afraid. We don't really want to "look inside." And Dr. Larry Crabb's book *Inside Out* calls us to look inside, honestly, and see ourselves with a little more of the accuracy with which God sees us; then there can be real repentance and real healing...

In verse 10 it isn't that God doesn't want the people to return and be healed. But it is a prediction that they won't have any of it. God is saying to Isaiah--Go tell them what's going to happen:

- * They will hear from Me--I won't be silent.
- * But they won't care.
- * Discipline will come on them so that they will not be able to ignore my call to them.
- * The discipline will be very severe, but no more severe than exactly what is deserved and exactly what it will take to bring them back.

As we view on television the land of Iraq and Kuwait and the devastation that occurred there, it is almost unreal seeming to us. This country has not seen that kind of devastation since 1865. And devastation is what Israel had to face, NOT because God would just get ornery, but because they earned it.

Isaiah 6:13 This verse shows what we read from Hosea's pen. God will preserve the people, ultimately. Here God says "a tenth" will be preserved, and even that "ten percent" will be disciplined. But a seed is always left in the burned out stump. And God is not through with His people even after the needed, severe discipline.

Look at Hebrews 12:4-13. There, the language is similar and we have the N.T. echo of this truth. It isn't just Israel whom God deals with in this way; it is the church too. It is the same God, and His purpose to call out a holy nation is the same today as it was in 750 B.C.

Is God Mad at Me? I don't know. I don't know what you're doing. I don't know a great deal about the general direction of your choices and decisions and priorities. Where are they? Are you growing in the faith?

Can you sense that in these days, even if you are older in years, that the Holy Spirit is even still changing you more to be like Jesus Christ--is that process discernible to YOU?

But if you ever wonder if the Lord is displeased with you, look at your own life honestly, and then look ALSO at Jesus. I take you back to that question I asked at the beginning:

Over Jesus' three year ministry, how many times did Jesus react in anger? You see,

He is far more patient than we are.
He is far more accepting and tolerant than we are.
He does not get "stressed out".
He doesn't suffer for lack of the whole story.
He's not a prude.
He's never selfish or unfair...

All the kinds of things that get US ticked off, He didn't indulge when He was here. But He does get weary of sin in His people; both in the O.T. and today. Sometimes we take Him pretty far out in His patience. And if we allow sin to take root in our hearts--

like maybe bitterness, or lust, or cynicism, or fear (which is ultimately a lack of trust), or apathy, or materialism...

Then we may incur divine discipline. But it is always in love, and I think He enjoys us far more than we think He does. I think the Lord Jesus desires our company in prayer. There is so much Biblical evidence to that effect that it is a wonder we operate on any other assumptions...

He is a holy God. Isaiah 6 gives us a glimpse of how holy. But He is a compassionate God too--with compassion far deeper than we know. Let's be controlled by THAT conviction. Let's allow ourselves to EXPECT God to do great things for us, to fulfill our needs, to answer our prayers.

Let's say to Him, *Here am I, Lord. Send me.* Serving a loving God and bearing the news that He is loving is exciting! May He give you a fresh vision of the perfect BALANCE in the Godhead between His holiness and His love.

Benediction: May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20,21