

# (Isaiah) a Nation Ripe for Judgment

by David Guzik

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*God's sermon to Judah, calling them to repentance and reminding them that His grace is not given to us because of any works, but to encourage our work.*

**Duration:** 1:03:21

**Scripture:** Isaiah 5:1, Isaiah 6:1, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Hebrews 12:6, 1 Peter 5:8

**Topics:** "Gods Judgment", "Personal Responsibility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the parable of the vineyard from Isaiah 5:1-7. The owner of the vineyard did everything he could to ensure a good harvest, but instead, it produced wild grapes. The speaker emphasizes that God cannot be blamed for the unfruitfulness of Judah, as He had done everything possible for them. The sermon challenges the listeners to reflect on what more God could have done for them and to take responsibility for their own actions.

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## Transcript

Isaiah chapter 5 continues, where chapters 2, 3 and 4 left off, it's a prophecy against the southern kingdom of Judah. And beginning with chapter 5, the prophet Isaiah, inspired by the Lord, uses a marvelous illustration to get God's point across to the people of Judah. Isaiah 5, verse 1. Now, let me sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard.

My well beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, he also made a wine press in it.

So he expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. The story here is about a vineyard that had many advantages. It belonged to a loving person, the person is called my well beloved.

It was planted on a very fruitful hill. The ground was carefully prepared and it was planted with good stock. It was protected by a watchtower in its midst so that invaders or robbers couldn't come and steal away the produce.

And even provision was made for the fruit to be processed. They made a wine press there at the vineyard. So God gave this, or of course God is the one illustrated as the one planting this vineyard.

The farmer, if you want to put it that way, gave this vineyard many advantages. But with all these advantages, it wasn't surprising that he expected, as it says at the end of verse 2, so he expected it to

bring forth good grapes, wouldn't you? Buy a good piece of land, plant good stock in it, cultivate the soil well, plant it well, guard it well, take good care of it. You expect good fruit to come from it.

But instead, look at the end of verse 2, it brought forth wild grapes. Now you shouldn't think that this is like wonderful little wild berries growing out there. Oh, wonderful, you know, just marvelous little wild grapes out there.

No, the Bible says here, excuse me, one commentator says by wild grapes, it says we're dealing here with something worse than unfruitfulness. The New Testament also speaks of a faith which brings forth fruit, but the fruit is dead works which pollute the air like a cadaver. This is known as the wolf's bane or the wild vine.

It does bear beautiful berries, the berries grown by the wild grape. This particular plant described here, it's a beautiful to look at berry, but they're bitter, foul smelling and poisonous in nature. The commentator goes on to add, this is a precise description of the self-willed and false religion of the unfaithful covenant people.

So these wild grapes are poisonous berries. They're not merely useless, they're unprofitable, they're bad, they're noxious and poisonous. And what I find interesting about this is the fact that it produces wild grapes also shows that it produced just what you would expect it to produce if nobody had done anything to it.

You can get wild berries out in the wild. You don't need to choose a good piece of land and prepare it carefully and plant it well and choose good stock and all that. You don't need to do that if you're looking for wild grapes.

All the love, all the care, all the time, all the investment, all the work had resulted in nothing. So how does God apply the story? Anybody starting to feel convicted yet? Verse three. And now, oh, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between me and my vineyard.

I love it. God says, OK, look, men of Judah, Jerusalem, explain to me this problem. What's my vineyard? God says.

And of course, they understand what he means by the illustration. What more? Verse four. What more could have been done to my vineyard that have that I have not done in it? Why, then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? You see, the question is simple, who is to blame for the harvest of only wild grapes? Is it the fault of the owner of the vineyard or is it the fault of the vineyard itself? Now, we know and they knew that farming is never, excuse me, is always a matter of cause and effect.

Literally, you could never blame a vineyard for the produce of wild grapes or lack of production. But in the Lord's vineyard, the will of man is a factor. And so it's different.

God says, judge between me and the vineyard. What a question. Verse four, what more could have been done to my vineyard in the story? There was nothing left undone by the owner of the vineyard.

He did all he could do in the same way. God could not be blamed for all the wild grapes that Judah brought forth. God did all that he could do apart from making man robots.

Acting apart from or against their will. And the bottom line is this, when God looks at Judah and they're unfruitful, they're unprofitable for him. He says, who's to blame? Is it me? Is there something I didn't do for you? The Lord wants to know.

No, Judah has to answer. You've done everything, Lord. Spurgeon said, oh, you that profess to be his people, what more could Christ have done for you? What more could the Holy Spirit have done? What richer promises, what wiser precepts, what kinder providences, what more gracious patience? That's a convicting question tonight, isn't it? What more do you want God to do? I mean, what more are we waiting around for him to do something that, you know, well, Lord, you know, you've just fallen short in this area.

If you just do this, then I'd really walk right with you and and then you'd really see fruit produced. You know, Lord, come on. As soon as you get this right, Lord, then we can move on.

God stands before you tonight. He stands before me because what more can I do? It is possible for God to do a work in his people, but for his people to receive that work in vain, Paul warned. We then, as workers together with him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

That's what Paul wrote in Second Corinthians six. Now, of course, a real vineyard, a literal vineyard doesn't do anything. But you and I, as God's vineyard, we're called to work with the grace of God so that grace is not received in vain.

Now, friends, please, let's understand. I hope that you've heard this from this pulpit before. I hope that I'm saying enough that everybody's clear on it.

God's grace is not given to us because of any works, not past, not present, not promised. Yet God's grace is given to us to encourage our work. Not to tell you that your work is unnecessary.

God doesn't want us to receive his grace and become passive. Isaiah knew that God gives his grace. We work hard and that's how the work of God is done.

So how about it? Charles Spurgeon asked a very challenging series of questions, he says. Has it been so with us, have we rewarded the well-beloved thus ungratefully for all of his pains? Have we given him hardness of heart instead of repentance, unbelief instead of faith, indifference instead of love, idleness instead of holy industry, impurity instead of holiness? And when you think about all that God has done for you and in you. What kind of fruit is there in your life from all that careful cultivation that the Lord has done? Look at the tragedy of the unproductive in you now, verse five, and now please let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away a hedge and it shall be burned and break down its wall and it shall be trampled down.

I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned or dug, but there should come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds.

They rain no rain on it for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, the house of Israel and the men of Judah are as pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression for righteousness, but behold, weeping. God's making it very clear and just in case it didn't get through Judah, Jerusalem, you're the vineyard.

And God says, if you persist in your unproductiveness, your unfruitfulness, I'm going to do what I would do in the story. God says, all I have to do is stop providing special protection. God says, I'll take away his hedge.

I'll take away the protection. You may feel that you're going through it right now in your life. You don't know how much the Lord is protecting you from.

If the Lord were to take away that protection. You'd really feel it. You see, in a limited sense, God does this as a way of judging his people, as a way of disciplining his people, he'll take away the hedges and what will happen? God says, I will lay it waste.

It shall not be pruned or dug. What will God do to the unproductive vineyard in this sense? He says, I'll leave it alone. It was not frightening.

Here's the vineyard resisting and protesting the pruning and the digging and the watering the owner does. Here comes, you know, it's time for for pruning and then, ouch, ouch. No, don't do that.

It's time for the digging at the roots. The thing I was out, you're hurting my roots. Stop that.

It's cold. Stop. And the watering of the vineyard.

Oh, you're getting me all wet. Can't you just leave me alone? Finally, God says the vineyard not producing fruit, I'll leave you alone. The owner says, fine, no more pruning, no more digging, no more watering.

You'll see for yourself if that is better. Now, friends, many discouraged children of God wish the Lord would stop pruning, stop digging, stop watering. Those things may be hard, but it is even worse when the Lord stops doing.

Do you feel the pruning of God in your life, the digging around the roots? You're all soaking wet from the water. It's uncomfortable, isn't it? Praise God for it tonight. Just praise him for it.

It means he hasn't abandoned you. He's working in you. The person I'm afraid for tonight is a person.

Hey, no, there's no doing anything in my life. Man, it's been smooth sailing for the longest time. No attacks from the devil, no pruning in my life.

Wow, I must be blessed. I don't know. Maybe the Lord's let go of that vineyard.

Unfortunately, it says the result here in verse seven, you look for justice. But behold, oppression for righteousness. But behold, weeping.

Now, it's kind of interesting about this verse is in the Hebrew. Isaiah is playing on words in the Hebrew. He's saying he looked for a mishpot, but behold, mishpot.

He looked for Tasekda, but behold, Teska, you know, very similar sounding words. And he's rhyming them to say, I look for this, but found this. I look for this, but found this.

And that's why verse eight, woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field. So there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land. In my hearing, the Lord of hosts said, truly, many houses shall be desolate, desolate, great and beautiful ones without inhabitant for 10 acres of vineyard shall yield one bath and a home or a seat shall yield one ephah.

Now, the prophet Isaiah is pronouncing woes on this unproductive vineyard, the nation of Judah is pronouncing woes on the nation that's ripe for judgment. And you know who he who he focuses on first, the land barons. The real estate magnets, the big property developers, woe to those who join house to

house.

The picture is a greedy real estate buying and development covetousness. It's just greed. And what do you say the judgment will be? Many houses shall be desolate, great and beautiful ones without inhabitant.

You know, I think he's saying in judgment, God's going to not allow the real estate deals to be successful and have many vacant and unsold houses. Hey, you got this big mansion, you want to sell it, you can't sell it now, it's a big burden on your back. It's God's judgment on that verse 11.

Here's woe to those who party all the time. Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may follow intoxicating drink who can tell you until night, until wine and flames them. The harp and the strings, the tambourine and the flute, the wine are in their feasts, but they do not regard the work of the Lord nor consider the operation of his hands.

Therefore, my people have gone into captivity because they have no knowledge. Their honorable men are famished and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore, she'll has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure.

Their glory and their multitude and their pomp and he who is jubilant shall descend into it. People shall be brought down. Each man shall be humbled in the eyes of the lofty, shall be humbled.

But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment and the God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness. Then the lamb shall feed in their pasture and the waste places of the fast ones, strangers shall eat. The picture is here of people who work hard, yeah, they work hard, all right, but what do they work hard at partying and endlessly celebrating their lives are filled with substance abuse and music.

But look at the end of verse 12. But they do not regard the work of the Lord nor consider the operations of their hand of his hands. My friends, I think that this is a very valid question for us because.

It's amazing to see how greatly our culture is given over to just entertainment and endless partying and endless celebration of things. And you might ask, what's wrong with that kind of lifestyle? I mean, honestly, what's wrong with it? I mean, doesn't God wants to have fun? Hasn't God given us life to enjoy? What's wrong with it then? And simply put, what's wrong about it is it forgets about God. Though they may claim to remember him in some way, oh, yeah, the good Lord's looking out for me all the time, you know, while they're getting wasted or whatever, they may claim to remember him in some way.

Look at what it says in verse 12. They do not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands. Friends, anybody who really does regard the work of the Lord and really does consider the operation of his hands, you know what you're going to do? You're going to live as if God is real and as if there's a lot more to life than partying and entertainment.

That's the problem with that kind of lifestyle, among others, of course, just leaving aside the self-destructive and other destructive nature of it. It disregards God. He says, therefore, look at their first 13, my people have gone into captivity, those who forget about God because of their partying and entertainment will be judged by captivity.

That's going to end the last. It's going to exalt the Lord and it's going to reward the meek. That's what the judgment of God will do.

It'll end the last exalt the Lord, but it'll also reward the meek. Verse 17, then the lambs shall feed in their pasture and in the waste places of the fat one stranger. So you've got to reward the meek instead.

Verse 18, this is woe to those who confuse moral issues. Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as with a cart rope that say, let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it and let the counsel of the holy one of Israel draw near and come that we may know it. Maybe we should stop right there and explain what he means by those few verses.

The idea is of men pulling sin to themselves with the ropes of emptiness. You see, they're drawn to sin and they're drawing it to themselves and they don't realize the judgment of God. Matter of fact, they make light of it.

Look at it carefully here in verse 19. This is what they say. Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it.

You know what they're basically saying? Bring it in. Bring it on, God. Bring your judgment.

We're ready for it. Go ahead, Lord. You bring your judgment.

Sure. Isn't that a frightening thing? They're meant to invite the judgment of God. How often have you heard people lost in sin, in rebellion to God? Well, you know, I can't wait to stand before the Lord when I stand before God.

I'm going to have a few questions for him. You know, do you realize what they're saying? You know, come on, Lord, bring it on. Yeah, I want to see.

They don't want to stand before him. How foolish. You better get your life right and repent.

He continues on verse 20. 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. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight.

You see, these people using clever and deceptive words, they blur moral issues and they excuse their sin. They look at their own evil and call it good and they look at the good of others and call it evil. Isaiah is describing a deep state of moral confusion where standards are out the window, where there are no absolutes.

What matters is, does it feel good or does it work? Not that there's a transcendence apart from us, good or evil that we have to answer to. How accurately these verses describe the national mindset of the United States of America. I don't know, my friends, it's so strange how difficult it is in our nation to call evil, evil and good, good.

Boy, I mean, you think of the political situation in our land. You think of the moral situation, the political situation perfectly mirrors the moral temperature of our land. And it's just tragic.

Now, you and I can rail against it all night long. Well, you know, politicians in Washington. What about the people in Sacramento? And, you know, it's valid things to talk about, I suppose.

Can I just ask, what about us tonight in this room? What about the person in the mirror? Do you call evil good and good evil? When it's in you, do you call it good? When it's in somebody else, do you call it evil?

Friends, it's easy to do. But God wants to lift us up to a higher place, to have his heart, his mind. The bottom line is in verse 21.

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes. The whole reason why people reject the moral absolutes of God is because they're proud in themselves. Can you imagine going up to God and saying, you know, I've got a better way to run the universe? Let me tell you.

Now, like if you built an automobile from the ground up and you put your heart and love, you built every aspect of it. And you wrote the maintenance manual for the owner's man. You told that everything, how the automobile works.

He gets here. Here's the car. And here's the manual.

I want you to take a look at it. And the guy takes a look. Oh, who needs this? I'll figure it out as I want.

Who needs to put oil in the crankcase? I'll put antifreeze in the crankcase. Right. They're both liquids that get poured into the engine compartment.

What's the big deal? It goes on and on. It's foolish, as crazy as that is, how audacious it is for us to stand before God and to instruct him on moral standards. People answer back, the Bible? Well, it's so judgmental.

After all, judge not, lest you be judged. It's all how you interpret it. You have your interpretation.

I have mine. All of that exalts the thinking of man over the word of God. And there's not a single person in this room who lives up to God's standard as it's revealed in this book.

We all sin and fall short of the glory of God. But we should all be able to agree there is a standard. Whether you live up to it, whether I live up to it, that's a side issue.

We agree there is a standard and we're willing to be judged by it. When we're right by it, we're right. When we're wrong by it, we're wrong.

But God's word stands and we won't be wise in our own eyes. It continues on here, verse twenty two. Woe to men mighty at drinking wine.

Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink who justify the wicked for a bribe and take away justice from the righteous man. You see, these men are men of accomplishment, men of high achievement in sin. You know, wow, they're great drinkers.

Wow, they can really bring down the liquor. Whoa, boy, look at all that. Let me read you a word from John Trapp, commentator from fifteen hundreds.

The prophet invades against this vice a second time, he's saying he's already talked about drunkenness. The prophet invades against this vice a second time because it was grown so common. Drunkards also are a soddish kind of creatures and had therefore more than need to be double dealt with.

Many of these shots take it for a great glory that they are mighty to drink wine. What kind of achievement is that? I can really hold my liquor. Oh, congratulations.

You're mighty at drinking wine. Oh, you know, of all the things that could be an accomplishment in this life. What what you want that on your tombstone or something goes on worse, the verse twenty two justify the wicked for a bribe and take away justice from the righteous.

And these are men who care only for their own pleasure and entertainment and care nothing for others. And so the Lord promises judgment. Verse twenty four.

Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, as the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness and their blossom will ascend like the dust because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts. And despise the word of the holy one of Israel, therefore, the anger of the Lord is aroused against his people. He stretched out his hand against them and stricken them and the hills trembled.

Their carcasses were as refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this, his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still. He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar and will whistle to them from the end of the earth.

Surely they shall come with speed swiftly. No one will be weary or stumble among them. No one will be slumber or sleep, nor will the belt on their loins be loose, nor the strap of their sandals be broken.

Whose arrows are sharp and all their bows bent, their horses hooves will seem like flint and their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring will be like a lion. They will roar like young lions.

Yes, they will roar and lay hold of the prey they will carry away safely and no one will deliver. And that day they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks the land, behold, darkness and sorrow and the light is darkened by the clouds.

You're ready for judgment. You're like stubble and chaff, which are flammable. God's warning of a sudden, complete and severe judgment.

And they say, why? Because they rejected the law of the Lord of hosts. Every one of Judah's sins could be traced back to rejection and a despising of what God says. Man's opinion was more important to them than God's word.

So what will God do? Look at verse 26. God will lift up a banner from the nations from afar. He'll whistle to them from the end of the earth.

You know what that means? God will whistle to the other nations and point at Judah and say, come and get them. And will they do it? You bet they'll do it. They'll come with speed, swiftly.

No one will be weary among them. No one, nor will the belt on their loins be loose, whose arrows are sharp and their bows bent. The armies that God will call against Judah are all business.

They're totally focused, prepared and readied. And what are the men of Judah doing? Well, they're using their strength for drinking contests. What a mismatch.

The men of Judah are soft, drunk and flabby, and they're going to fall against dedicated enemies. And that's who God is going to bring against them. You know, a spiritual application on this was suggested to my mind.

Think about the strength and the dedication of your spiritual enemies. If we will not be strong in the Lord for our own sakes. If we will not be strong in the Lord for the sake of the Lord and his glory, should we not at least be strong for the sake of our enemies? They are strong and focused against us.

Should we not be strong in the Lord and focused on the Lord to overcome such enemies? Just knowing who your enemy is to be enough incentive, say, you know what? I'm going to be strong in the Lord. I won't even do it for my sake. I won't even do it for the Lord's sake.

God forbid we'd say that, but you know, sometimes that's not motivation enough, it seems. And let the fact that you've got an enemy who's dedicated to destroying you, let that motivate you. But God says at the end of verse 30, Behold, darkness and sorrow and the light is darkened by the clouds.

That's a distressing place. Why would the Lord put Judah in such a place? Why? Because he loves them. Those words are harsh, but merciful.

They're a slap in the face to prevent total destruction. God wants as many in Judah as possible to take this warning and to repent and to be spared judgment. The only question is God's warning us.

Will we listen to the warning? Friends, God's woes are better than the devil's welcomes. And that's what Judah was supposed to do. Now, that ends the prophecy encompassing chapters two through five.

Now, beginning with chapter six, we come into a much more glorious passage. Are you ready to get out all that judgment? Let's look at something glorious. Isaiah six one.

In the year King Uzziah died. I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple above it stood seraphim. Each one had six wings.

With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet and with two he flew. Now, Isaiah begins all this by saying in the year that King Uzziah died, King Uzziah of Judah had a long and distinguished reign. He had the second longest reign of any of the kings of Judah.

Fifty two years. You can find his reign described in Second Chronicles, Chapter 26 and in Second Kings, Chapter 15, where he's called Azariah in Second Kings 15. It's a similar name, just a variant spelling.

Uzziah began his reign when he was only 16 years old and he reigned 52 years. Overall, he was a good king. Listen to what Second Kings 15 says, says that he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father, Amaziah, did.

And in Second Chronicles 28, it says. That he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. Isn't that great? That was a good king.

Uzziah also led Israel military victories over the Philistines and other neighboring nations. He was a strong king, an energetic builder, a planner and a general. Second Chronicles 26, 8 says his fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

What a great king Uzziah was. But his life ended tragically. You know what happened to Uzziah at the end of his days? Listen, it says in Second Chronicles 26.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord, his God, by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. You see, Uzziah was a king and God always wanted there to be a separation between the kings and the priests, kings weren't priests and priests weren't kings. And later, because Uzziah grew proud because he was such a successful king.

One day Uzziah said, you know what? I'm sick and tired of the priests getting all the glory of God in the temple. I never get to go in there. I never once have been inside the temple building.

Only the priests get to go in there. Forget it. I'm going in there.

And the priests tried to stop him. Uzziah was holding incense in a censer full of burning coals. And he was going to go in and offer the incense on the altar, burn incense in the temple.

And he pushes away the priest. I'm the king. You can't keep me from there.

I don't care if you're a priest. I'm the king. And as he burst through the doors of the temple, God struck him with leprosy from head to foot and he died.

So Isaiah to say in the year King Uzziah died is to say something. It is to say in the year a great and wise king died. But it is also to say in the year a great and wise king who had a tragic end died.

Isaiah had a lot of reasons to be discouraged and disillusioned in the year King Uzziah died because a great king had passed away and because his life ended tragically. You can just imagine Isaiah saying, Lord, where are you in this? Here's this good man who went so bad and now he's struggling with his life. With leprosy and he's dead.

And who's going to come after him? And what are you going to do with Judah? And, Lord, I don't understand. Where are you, Lord? I saw the Lord sitting on a throne. Where was God in the midst of all this? He was enthroned in heaven.

Isaiah is shaken. Where are you? What's going to happen to the throne of Israel? Who's going to rule over us? Well, we have we've had one king for fifty two years. What is the only king I ever remember? God, what's going on? He's such a good throne of Israel is empty.

What's going to happen, Lord? God gave Isaiah a vision of the throne of heaven. You know what? Can I say something, my friends? There is a throne in heaven and the Lord God sits upon it as the sovereign of the universe. That throne in heaven is not empty.

You are not going to find an empty throne in heaven. This is the central fact of heaven. There is an occupied throne in heaven.

God does not sit on a chair in heaven. He doesn't sit on a sofa. He doesn't sit on a lazy boy recliner.

Anybody might sit on a chair, but sovereign kings sit on thrones. Judges sit on thrones. Those with proper authority and sovereignty sit on thrones.

And that's where God is sitting. And that's where he revealed himself to Isaiah. Now, Isaiah was not alone in seeing God on his throne.

Almost everybody in the Bible who ever had a vision of heaven was taken to heaven or wrote about heaven. Speaks about God's throne. The prophet Micaiah saw God's throne.

Job saw God's throne. David saw God's throne. The sons of Korah saw God's throne.

Ethan the Ezraite saw God's throne. You know who he is? He wrote Psalm 89. Ezekiel saw God's throne.

Daniel saw God's throne. And the apostle John saw God's throne. In fact, if you want to give the book of Revelation another title, call it the book of God's throne.

God's throne is mentioned in the book of Revelation more than thirty five times. And when you think of what atheism is all about, when you think of what materialism is all about, they say that there is no throne, that there is no seat of authority or power that all the universe must answer to. The bottom line of humanism is that they say, oh, there's a throne, but man sits upon it.

Friends, the Bible makes it clear that there is a throne in heaven, no matter what the atheists or the materialists says, and that God sits upon the throne, not man, in spite of whatever humanism might say. If you get that fact straight in your head, it's amazing how much else falls into place in life. There's a throne in heaven and I don't sit on it.

God does. Yes, everything's much clearer now, Lord. Isaiah might have been depressed or discouraged because a great leader of Judah was no longer on the throne.

But God in heaven now shows Isaiah, don't worry about it, Isaiah. Isaiah may not be on his throne, but I'm on my throne. You don't have to worry about it.

Matter of fact, it says here of this throne, verse one, that it's high and lifted up. The throne is exalted and majestic. The throne set its occupant in a superior position.

Can I say it again? A superior position. Deal with it. God's high and lifted up.

But sometimes we mistake the love of God, the compassion of God, the graciousness and the comfort of God for thinking that he's on our level. Friends, he's condescending to you and he's loving you. But I don't mean this to be taken wrong, but it's kind of like when you're petting and loving on your dog.

I mean, your dog loves it. Yeah, he's just like me. He's just like me.

And you're thinking, yeah, right. You know, I'm not eating what you eat. High and lifted up.

And look at this. If you want an idea of his majesty, look at verse one. And the train of his robe filled the temple.

I was not talking about a little model railroad train, you know. You know what a train on a robe is, it's the big, long tail. We don't think of robes having trains.

We think of bridal dresses having trains, right? The bride, you know, here comes the bride down the aisle and she has a train. And in a really majestic wedding, you know, big fancy pants wedding that the bride, you know what I mean? You know, a big fancy dress wedding. You know, the bride has this huge train.

And what does she have? You know, a fancy dress. She'll have a couple of attendants just for the train, right? That's all they do. That's all these people, these little kids or whatever, they just take care of the

train.

No difference in that day. Kings of that day would wear robes with long trains. You know why? Because they were difficult to work in and maneuver in.

You don't see a bride with a long train out mowing the lawn. It's not going to work, she'll get caught in the mower. It doesn't work when you're dressed like that, you're not out there to work.

People are there to serve you. You're honored, you're dignified. It's like saying I am important enough that I don't have to work.

I'm a person of honor and dignity. Others must serve and wait upon me. Friends, God is so honored, so important, so dignified.

The train of his robe built the temple. That's a long train. It built the temple.

Now, verse two, above it, above the throne stood Seraphim. Surrounding the throne of God are angels known here as Seraphim. Now, in many other passages, these angels are known as Cherubim.

And in Revelation, chapter four, they're known as living creatures. This is the only chapter in the Bible where these creatures are known as Seraphim. Now, some people say, well, these aren't Cherubim, they're Seraphim.

See, they're given different names. But no, I really believe that it's referring to the same creatures. You know why? Well, the name Seraphim means burning ones.

And in Ezekiel, chapter one, in Ezekiel, chapter 10, I won't I won't read the passages to you, but if you want to check for yourself, Ezekiel, chapter one, Ezekiel, chapter 10, it speaks of these Cherubim and it specifically calls them Cherubim. And it says that they're burning on fire, that they're fiery. And so I think Isaiah may not have known the name of them and just called them burning ones.

He might not have known the technical name Cherubim, so he just calls them the burning ones. And what about them? Well, verse two, each one has six wings. With two, he covered his face, with two, he covered his feet and with two, he flew.

Now, again, in Revelation, chapter four, verse eight, the apostle John also mentions there's six wings and what do they do with them? Well, with two, they fly. And it's important that they fly because that means that they're ready to do God's will. They're ready to do his bidding immediately.

They're good servants. They can go anywhere God wants just immediately. There's no delay.

With two of their wings, they cover their face. Friends, this blows me away that the Seraphim, the Cherubim that surround the throne of God, cannot look upon his face. God says to man, no man shall see my face and says it to the Seraphim also.

They can't look at his face. And friends, I imagine that since redeemed man, glorified man is at a higher place than the angels, when we are redeemed and glorified, when our salvation is complete and we have a resurrection bodies, then we will be able to look upon the face of God. But until that time, we cannot and even the angels with two, they fly with two, they cover the face and with two, they cover their feet.

The feet speak of their creatureliness. They hide this humble area of the body so that nothing even possibly deficient is seen in the Lord's presence. Friends, this is significant that the humility expressed by the Seraphim before the throne of God is profound.

Think about it. They have six wings, right? And with four of those wings, they're expressing their humility. Two of them cover their face, two of them cover their feet and with two, they're serving God, right? They're flying.

Four wings express humility. Two wings express service. Might I say to you that this is the proper balance in life? Charles Spurgeon said they thus have four wings for adoration and two for active energy, four to conceal themselves and two with which to occupy themselves in service.

And we may learn from them that we shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverend and humbled in his presence. Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigor. Adoration must exceed activity as Mary at Jesus's feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving so much sacred reverence must take the first place in energetic service following due course.

You're serving God. Are you humble before him? Are you praising him? The angels knew that that was more important, more wings went to that. Verse three and one cried to another and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory and the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out and the boy at the house was filled with smoke. I think this is interesting. It says one cried to another.

You understand here that the seraphim are not even directly addressing the Lord God here. They're proclaiming God's glorious nature in character to one another in the presence of the Lord. Hey, you, he's holy.

Holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. Well, let me tell you, no holy.

And it goes back and forth. They can't stop declaring the greatness and the glory of the person in the character of God to each other. They're not even saying it to the Lord.

Notice what they say. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Now, why do they repeat it three times? Wasn't enough just to say it once.

No, it isn't enough. It isn't enough. And they say it three times because there's three persons and one God, that's one reason.

Father, you're holy, son, you're holy, holy spirit, you are holy. There's another reason to. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

They repeat holy three times because in the Hebrew language, intensity is communicated by repetition. There's kind of an obscure passage in the book of Genesis where it describes. Some men fleeing from the army of Abraham and they fell in what the Bible calls it's translated in the King James Version as bitumen pits.

You know, like tar pits, you know, terrible. You know what it is literally in the Hebrew. They fell into pit pits, pity pits, I mean, it's intensified, they're really pit like pits.

It gets the idea through this wasn't just a pit, this was a pit pit. That's the passage in Genesis, we're talking about that. It's just giving you an idea of in the Hebrew language, intensity is expressed by repetition.

Now to say holy says something. Say the Lord is holy, holy says far more, but to say holy, holy, holy is the Lord is to declare his holiness in the highest possible degree. Friends, what do we mean when we say that God is holy and holy in the highest possible degree? Please understand holiness at its root has the idea of a heartness.

It describes someone or something which is set apart from other people or things. An object can be holy if it's set apart for sacred service, a person is holy if they're set apart for God's will and God's service. You take a look at this microphone right over here to my left and you take a look at it, you say, OK, that microphone will only ever be used for worship music.

That's it ever. And we put a special tag on it. We put it in a special place.

We put it in a special case. No, you cannot tell a joke in that microphone. You cannot read announcements in that microphone.

You can't even preach a sermon in that microphone. It's only for the singing of worship songs. There is a sense for that purpose.

That microphone would be holy. It's set apart. It's reserved for a special purpose or for a special person.

Friends, God is set apart. Well, what is he set apart from? Two things, really, really much more of it, I'll simplify. God is set apart, first of all, from creation.

He is not a creature and he exists outside of all creation. Friends, if all creation were to dissolve, the Lord God would remain. God exists independently of creation.

Secondly, God is set apart from humanity in that his creation is nature or his essence is divine, not human. Let me see if I can explain it to you in terms that everybody can grab on to. God is not a super man.

He is not the ultimate man. God is not just smarter than any man, stronger than any man, older than any man, better than any man. You can't measure God on man's chart at all because he's divine and we're human.

He is set apart. And you know what's glorious about that, though, is that because we are made in the image of God, humanity is compatible with deity. It's not the same thing as deity, but it's compatible with it.

They're different, but they're not automatically opposite each other. And this is how Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, could add humanity to his deity when he became a man. Unfallen humanity is not deity, but it's compatible with it.

Friends, God's holiness is a part of everything that he is and everything that he does. God's power is a holy power. God's love is a holy love.

God's wisdom is a holy wisdom. Holiness is not an aspect of God's personality. It's one characteristic of his entire being.

You know what it means? Look, if I were to stand before you tonight, I'm going to preach on holiness. Oh, great. You know, haven't I been convicted of sin enough today? That's what holiness means, right? God's so holy and I'm not.

But you know what? I think that's only taking one person. I think that's only taking one aspect of what holy means. It's true.

The fact that the Lord is holy, it means that God has a purity that we don't have. God has a moral spotlessness that we do not have. God has a goodness that we do not have in our lives yet.

My friends, don't you see that it also means that God has a love that you do not have? A forgiveness that you do not have, a mercy you do not have. Let's let the sword of holy cut both ways. Man, I think if we were really tied into what it means that God is holy, if I said I'm going to preach a sermon on holiness, he'd say, yeah, I mean, I'm going to find out tonight that God has a love for me that goes so far beyond any love that any human can have.

Yes, thank you, Lord. You are set apart in your love. It's not like you just love me more than any human does.

You love me in a completely different level. It's not like you forgive me, just like the nicest human could forgive me your forgiveness of a completely different level, your grace, your mercy, your compassion, your comfort. God is set apart, my friends.

And that means he can be to us everything, everything, the whole earth is full. Look at verse four and the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out and the house is filled with smoke. Now, friends, check this out.

Do you know whose voice it is shaking the posts of the door? It's not God's voice. It's the seraphim's voice, the voice of him who cried out. It's the seraphim who are doing the crying out.

The seraphim are majestic beings and their voice carries weight when they speak the doorposts of God's throne room shake. The idea may be that Isaiah was watching from the doorway and when the seraphim cried out, he can feel the doorpost shake and it's like, oh, what's going on here now? These are some bad dudes surrounding the throne of God. You know what I'm talking about? They cry out in the doorpost shake.

And might I say this is a building built to pretty high code, right? And what about some flimsy little building here? This is impressive. Yet these high, majestic beings, perhaps the highest beings in all of God's creation, they have one occupation. Their existence is given over to the praise and worship and honor of the Lord God who's enthroned in heaven.

What can you or I do that's possibly a higher calling than that? They sang so powerfully that the doorposts were shaking. Now, listen, these are the most majestic beings in all creation. If they heartily sing forth the praises of God, how much more should we? Shouldn't we sing with the same passion, with the same heart, with the same intensity? Can anybody in this room tell me that those angels have more to thank God for than you and I do? I don't think so.

I don't think that they have any more to thank God for the night house was filled with smoke. Verse five. And then I said, woe is me, for I am undone because I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a

people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the king, the lord of hosts.

What made Isaiah feel like he was coming apart, like he was undone? Well, two things. First of all, it was the sight and the sound of the seraphim. Second, it was the vision of the Lord God.

You see, when Isaiah, first of all, saw those angels and he saw the seraphim and all their holy humility, all their obedience, all their praise to God, he realized that not only he was unlike the Lord God, he said, I'm not even like those angels. They can cry out, holy, holy, holy and praise God so beautifully. But he says, I can't do it.

I'm a man of unclean lips. I can't praise God like they praise him. Adam Clarke put it this way, he says, Isaiah is thinking, I am a man of unclean lips.

I cannot say, holy, holy, holy, which the seraphics claim. They are holy. I am not so.

They see God and live. I have seen him. I must die because I'm unholy.

Isaiah just wasn't looking at the seraphim. He was looking at the Lord himself, too. And when Isaiah saw the Lord, he knew what kind of man he was as poorly as he compared to the seraphim.

That's nothing compared to how he relates to the Lord. This vision or actual experience of the throne of God did not immediately make Isaiah feel good. You know, the more clearly he saw the Lord, the more clearly he saw how bad his state was.

I'm suspicious when people say they have a vision of heaven and it's all good. I don't know, everybody in the Bible just about has ever saw God in heaven, man. It grieved them.

Job, Daniel, Peter, John, they all had similar experiences to this. Cries out, I am undone and that's not a bad place to be. Anybody undone here tonight? That's not a bad place to be.

Spurgeon said, God will never do anything with us till he is first of all undone us. And then he says, what, because I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of the people of unclean lips where my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. Oh, you know.

Time is escaping us here this evening, and I just say, get out your concordance or your Bible search program on your computer. Just look up lips, look up lips in the book of Psalms. You want to see lips? You'll see lips full of flattery and false intent.

You'll see lips that lie and are proud. You'll see lips that deceive. You'll see lips that are violent.

You'll see lips that bring death to others. Yeah, there's problem with our lips. Now, Isaiah didn't think for a moment that this was his only sin, but he saw that this was an example of the great and incurable disease of sin in him and his people.

He says, I've seen the king, the Lord of hosts. Isaiah was a righteous and a godly man by all outward appearance. Yet when he saw the enthroned king, the Lord of hosts, he saw how sinful he was in comparison.

So what happens for six, then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. How about that? These seraphim surrounding the throne of God, they

take time out and minister to Isaiah. What do they do? One of them get some tongs, goes over to the altar, picks up a live coal.

It's still hot and burning. It's so hot that the angel has to use tongs to grab it. Now, check this out.

Where's he get from? From the altar. That must correspond to the altar of incense, that place of prayer and praise and offering before the throne of God. The altar of incense stood before the holy of holies in the temple and the tabernacle of God.

By the way, let's make something plain here. The throne was for God, right? The altar was for Isaiah. The throne isn't for us.

The altar is for us. And so we come to the altar and the angel comes, brings that fire from the altar, takes a break that Isaiah and once he did, he touches his mouth with it. That coal is so hot that the angel can't grab it with his hands and he puts it on Isaiah's mouth.

This must have been painful, burning, hot coal applied to the lips, one of the more sensitive areas of the body, yet nothing is written that Isaiah reacted in pain. Either there was no pain because of a special blessing by God or what I think the pain didn't matter because of the majesty of the surrounding and the goodness of the cleansing. You see.

Isaiah knew that he did not serve the Lord like the seraphim. What does the name seraphim mean? Burning ones. So God said, I know Isaiah, I'm going to light a fire in you.

I'm going to take a coal from my altar. I'm going to light you on fire. Spurgeon said, Jehovah, who is a consuming fire, can only fitly be served by those who are on fire, whether they're angels or men.

It just trips me out. Look at what Isaiah said in the previous verse, verse five. He sees the Lord, he sees the seraphim and he says, woe to me, I'm undone.

Now, I don't know about you. I would have been saying, woe to me, I'm undone if some guy would come up with a burning coal and put it on my lips. That's when I would have been crying out.

We might think that a burning coal to the lips is more painful than a vision of the holy God. But for Isaiah, it was more disturbing to see the holiness of God and to see his lack of holiness than it was to have a burning coal applied to his lips. What does he say? Your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged.

Isaiah's sin had to be burned away. The fire of judgment was applied to his place of sin. Now, friends, this was obviously a spiritual transaction.

If somebody has a sinful mouth, you could go home and kiss all the burning hot coals you want to. And it's not going to take away the sin that's in your mouth. That's not going to purge your sin.

Let's remember the same principle. Our sin was placed upon Jesus and he was burned with the fire of God's judgment. Yet because he was holy and righteous himself, the fire of God's judgment did not harm him.

It only burned away the sin, our sin. Now, Isaiah is ready. He's been in the place of burning from there were some men once who were out hunting in a dry field.

There were wheat and stalks of grain all around and it was dry and it was the fall and they were out hunting for birds. And all of a sudden they looked over and saw on one end of the field a fire rushing towards them. They could tell from the direction of the wind that the fire was being driven right at them.

And they were in between the fire and a hill and they really couldn't get away. And they looked at it and they decided, what can we do? In a few short moments, that fire is going to be upon us and we can't escape it. We can't outrun this.

What are we going to do? So instantly, they had the clarity of mind to take out matches. And what they did was they burned an area around them and they laid down covering themselves in the burned out area so that when the wildfire swept through, it passed by the area that was already burned out. And God's fire of judgment and Jesus already took the punishment we deserve.

He is the burned out area. He received that purging, burning a fire. God's fire of judgment was poured out upon the son for our behalf.

If you put yourself in Jesus, you're standing in the area that's already burned out and the fire will pass. Isaiah was purged by the burning and so are we, but by Jesus. So once Isaiah had met with the Lord and been convicted of his sin and cleansed from his guilt, then he was ready to serve God.

I'm going to conclude tonight and we're going to not do the rest of this chapter. I'm going to resist that temptation because of the lateness of the hour. I would hurry through it.

It's too good to hurry through. Let me read this quotation from Spurgeon. He says, the effect of that live coal will be to fire the lip with a heavenly fame.

Oh, says one man, a flaming coal will burn the lips that a man cannot speak at all. That is just how God works with us. It is by consuming the fleshly power that he inspires the heavenly might.

Oh, let the lip be burnt and let the fleshly power of eloquence be destroyed. But oh, for the live coal to make the tongue eloquent with heaven's flame, the true divine power which urged the apostles forward and made them conquerors of the whole world. I think this is the third week in a row in Isaiah now where we talk about God's refiner's fire.

Right. A common theme here in Isaiah. And we stand back and we scream when we're in the midst of it.

Can't you see that it's a good thing? It's cleansing you and preparing you to serve. And next week, be pumped when we see Isaiah say, Lord, here I am. Send me.

Father, we want to have a vision of the exalted Lord in our midst and we want to join with those angels who sing in your presence. And we ask, Lord God, that you give us hearts to worship and the ability to love you and to praise you and to honor you. Lord God, Lord, we are not afraid to invite you to come from your altar and to touch us with the burning coal.

Lord, we know not in final judgment. We know that that fire has been poured out upon Jesus in our place. Lord, whatever flesh you need to burn away in our lives, we bear our lives to you.

And trust you, it's a perfect refiner. Thank you. We love you tonight in Jesus name.

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