

## Isaiah

My name is Isaiah. You may not know that I was a cousin of King Uzziah and you may not have remembered that he was the king who ruled by proxy through his son Jotham because of leprosy. You know me as a prophet, called to that office when Uzziah died. Being a prophet was especially poignant to me since Uzziah's leprosy was a judgement of the LORD. In his pride, he tried to burn incense in the Temple, a usually good ruler whose sudden stumble revealed deep moral flaws. But at his death, I had a life-changing experience.

"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. 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. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. '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.' Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.' 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!'"

I was witness to the amazing power, justice and mercy of the Lord God Jehovah. Assyria, a truly evil empire – you don't even want to know how evil -- had taken the northern Kingdom, Israel, most of the southern kingdom, Judah, and twice threatened Jerusalem. Hezekiah, although he had cleaned the land of idolatry, was weak on foreign policy. He tried to appease Sennacherib with gold and got a reprieve when Sennacherib withdrew to fight elsewhere. But then that mighty monarch challenged the Most High God by telling Hezekiah that none of the gods of the nations had withstood his forces. I believe a couple of phrases from your culture and language might apply here: "Make my day" and "Pity the fool."

God's message was basically, not only do I already know about your exploits, it was my plan. "Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone." But of Jerusalem, the LORD said. "I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant." The next morning when people looked out on the camp, 185,000 soldiers lay dead. How did the LORD do it?

Let me tell you about the other major miracle of my day, performed by the LORD at the request of the king. I brought a message to Hezekiah that he was about to die and was not surprised when he begged to be healed. As I was leaving, I was instructed to predict 15 more years of life. And when Hezekiah asked for a sign, I asked if he wanted the shadow caused by the sun to go forward or backward 10 steps. His request for backward 10 steps was granted. It was also revealed to me to offer a medical treatment.

Are these things related? I have to tell you about the knowledge of our day because many who later studied our records doubted us. Solomon knew of the spherical shape of the earth and Job knew that it hung over nothing. And those who kept track of the great astronomical events of the past noted that when the path of the sun was altered, there were terrors on the earth. Earthquakes were accompanied by drying up of streams and heating of the ground. These were associated for reasons that in my day were poorly explained but perhaps known to your science. Recall that Joshua in short order crossed the Jordan on dry ground, saw the walls of Jericho fall, experienced rocks falling from the sky on his enemies and then witnessed the sun stand still over Gibeon. Disasters were generally

anticipated when comets approached the earth. Observers of the heavenly bodies also described apparent lightning bolts when these came near. In your day, comets do not seem to come so nearby.

The purposes of the Most High are not merely to extend the lives of weak-kneed kings or even delay the consequences of chronic spiritual rebellion and idolatry by his chosen people. No, he had a bigger purpose to reveal – the biggest story of all. The coming of the Promised One. The fulfillment of predictions in the near future is intended to give credence to the prophecies not yet fulfilled. Immanuel was to come, and I was given word pictures that described the circumstances. Of course, I did not understand the full meaning when I wrote them down but could not mistake the majesty and grandeur of the crowning event of the LORD's entire Creation, the climax of all space and time.

In order to credential my book to later audiences who did not witness the movement of the shadow or the destruction of the 185,000 troops, I was told of the captivity of Judah by the Babylonian Empire – an empire not yet in existence. Then I told of their repatriation by a monarch – not yet born – named Cyrus. I understand that scholars of your day, unwilling to believe in the power of the Most High God, have claimed my book was written after the events happened. Those false prophets and foolish teachers will be just as unpleasantly surprised as supernaturally defeated Sennacherib was when the truth is known!

Have you heard the saying, "The dog returns to his vomit?" Hezekiah used the extension of his life to let the Babylonians spy out his treasures. He also fathered Manasseh, who was not only an evil king but the very one who ended my earthly life. Yet I am reminded of what King Solomon wrote, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases."

But on entering the eternal world, I marvel at the privilege I had been given to reveal the marvelous plan of him who says, "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit...." I knew it when he called me. I cried out, "Woe is me! For I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips...." Yet when he said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us," I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Are you unworthy and unqualified? That's exactly the kind of person he calls. Just say, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah 1 – 66, (Earthquakes 5:25, 42:15, 45:2, 49:11, 54:10, 64:1, 64:3) (Isaiah's call 5:1-8) (God inhabits eternity and the heart of the humble 57:15) (Isaiah's ministry 2 Chronicles 26 - 32, 2 Kings 18 – 20) (Disasters Joshua 1 – 10)