

- *Something completely new*

Isaiah was brought into a knowledge of God's will for his life

- *God needs a prophet to tell the nation about sin and salvation through sacrifice*

- *Isaiah volunteers to be a prophet!*

Isaiah is given a preview of what will happen as he ministers as God's prophet

- *Isaiah will preach but few will listen*

- *They will harden their hearts against his message*

- *He knows that this will happen*

Isaiah's experience prepared him to hear something which he had never heard before.

Isaiah was brought into a knowledge of God's will for his life. He now is made to hear God's concern for the entire nation. The problem of Isaiah and the problem of his nation were the same. He has already said: 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips'. If God saved Isaiah, God can save anyone. The same experience of forgiveness may come to many in the nation. But God is needing a prophet to send to the nation to tell of the seriousness of sin and to make known the possibility of being saved by the sacrifice for sin taken from the altar, the place of sacrifice. Now Isaiah becomes aware of the will of God in this matter.

⁸*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'
And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'*

It is the only place in the Bible where anyone volunteers to be a prophet! Generally the prophets of the Bible are rather unwilling to be called to speak God's word. Remember Jeremiah and Moses. Isaiah is the only one who volunteered for the work. We cannot minister God's word without a call from God but often a great desire to speak God's word is the beginning of God's call in our lives. So Isaiah is called to be a prophet. He is sent. God said, 'Go ...'

Isaiah is given a preview of what will happen as he ministers as God's prophet.

⁹*He said, 'Go and tell this people:
"Be ever hearing, but never discerning;
be ever seeing, but never knowing."
¹⁰Make the heart of this people calloused;
make their ears dull and close their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.'*

He is told he must preach and tell them not to have ability to understand what he is saying at all! It is a very surprising call! What it means is that he will preach to the people but few will listen. They will make their hearts hard against his message. Yet he must go on preaching, knowing that this is what will happen. What can you do when someone refuses God's word? You can only speak it again and give them a second chance. But then this is likely to make them harder still! Hardness of heart is the judgement that comes when someone refuses God's word. Isaiah knows right from the beginning that this is what will happen in his ministry. It is not an accident. At that stage of Israel's history God was handing them over to their own hardness of heart.

God has a will for the life of each believer. We shall not come to know it until we have experienced the cleansing that comes from the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The task may not be an easy one. It certainly was no easy calling for Isaiah at that particular stage of history. But he would have disciples¹¹ and God would give him strength. He will be equally faithful to us.

¹¹ as 8:16, 18 shows

Is there any hope for Judah?

• The hardness will last a long time – military invasion will overtake Judah and northern Israel

• Almost none of Judah would survive the invasion

• Judah would not be totally exterminated

• David's line would continue even though no kings were allowed

• Isaiah knows that he must proclaim the salvation to come through someone from the line of David

Is there any hope for Judah? Isaiah wants to know how long this hardness of heart will continue.

¹¹ Then I said, 'For how long, O Sovereign?'
 And he answered:
 'Until the cities lie ruined
 and without inhabitant,
 until the houses are left deserted
 and the fields ruined and ravaged,
¹² until Yahweh has put humankind far away
 and the land is utterly forsaken.'

The answer to Isaiah's question is that the hardness will continue for a long time and eventually military invasion will overtake Judah just as it is about to overtake northern Israel.

¹³ 'And though a tenth remains in the land,
 it will again be laid waste.'

Not even a tenth part of the land of Judah would survive the invasion that Isaiah anticipates. In the event it would be the Babylonians who overran Judah in this way but the invader is unnamed as yet.

'But as the terebinth and oak
 leave stumps when they are cut down,
 so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.'

However severe the coming judgement would be, Judah would not be totally exterminated. A tree that is chopped down might survive to grow again. In the same way the Davidic kingship will be chopped down. In the sixth-century Babylonian invasion the Davidic line of kings would come to an end. But there would be a stump left. The line would continue to exist even though no king was allowed by the Babylonians or any succeeding empire. Within the line of David there would be 'the holy seed', the promise of a 'son of David' who would be Israel's Messiah and the world's Saviour. From the very beginning Isaiah knew his people, knew how tough his ministry would be, and knew his message would focus on a coming Saviour for Israel and the world. The centre and substance of Isaiah's ministry would be the Lord Jesus Christ. He would not use the name 'Jesus' for it was not yet known to him, but Isaiah already knows a 'ransom-price will be paid'¹, by Someone who branches out from the line of David², and that salvation will be achieved in Jerusalem³, giving the presence of God and his protection in a way greater than ever known before⁴. He knows he must prophesy. He knows who are his people. He knows the course his ministry must follow. And, above all, he knows the One he must proclaim.

1 1:27
 2 4:2
 3 4:3
 4 4:5-6



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