

## Isaiah Chapters 6 and 7

### Encounters With the Holy One

Isaiah is a great book to give us a complete picture of God. As we proceed through this study we will see many aspects of the Holy One in heaven. We see, among other things, His power, sovereignty, majesty, and justice.

For instance, in chapter one we saw God as the One who reasons with us to call us to repentance and offers forgiveness. In chapter two we saw God as the One who gives us His Word and who teaches us His ways. We heard His warning that if we persist in our pride and in worshiping idols, we will be humbled and the idols destroyed. Chapters three, four, and five focused on God as One who sees the oppression of His people and who will judge the rich and the proud who have reveled in drunkenness and dishonesty and oppressed the poor and humble.

God is warning that people who are wise in their own eyes are often people who are their own gods. We have a lot of that today: individuals who consider themselves to be the last word, who believe that God exists only if it makes sense to them. These are those who carve out a god of their own liking. A god whom they only want to see as benevolent, not as One who judges in any way. But what these people don't recognize is that a god who is only benevolent must of necessity also be incapable of dealing with the sin and evil in the world. Therefore they only have half a god. Think about it.

We will also find that this book also has a lot of parallels to current day USA. The test of obedience for God's people in the time of Isaiah, as it is today, is not outward religiosity, not just going to church on Sunday, but what you do on Monday through Saturday as well. God is concerned about the contradiction between the outward religious actions of His people and their real lives, about the masks they wear and their real selves.

As we see who God is and how He deals with people, we can feel hope. In today's study we find one of the **central promises of Scripture**. We will also see how two men had encounters with God and how each of them reacted. So let's get right into chapters 6 and 7, starting with chapter 6.

#### Isaiah 6:1-13

*1 In the year King Uzziah died (739 BC)<sup>1</sup>, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple.*

*2 Hovering around him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Parentheses added.

3 In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

4 The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke.

5 Then I said, "My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet **I HAVE SEEN THE KING, THE LORD ALMIGHTY!**"

6 Then one of the seraphim flew over to the altar, and he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs.

7 He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

8 Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?" **AND I SAID, "LORD, I'LL GO! SEND ME."**

9 And he said, "Yes, go. But tell my people this: '**YOU WILL HEAR MY WORDS, BUT YOU WILL NOT UNDERSTAND. YOU WILL SEE WHAT I DO, BUT YOU WILL NOT PERCEIVE ITS MEANING.**'"

10 Harden the hearts of these people. Close their ears, and shut their eyes. That way, they will not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn to me for healing."

11 Then I said, "Lord, how long must I do this?" And he replied, "Until their cities are destroyed, with no one left in them. Until their houses are deserted and the whole country is an utter wasteland."

12 Do not stop until the Lord has sent everyone away to distant lands and the entire land of Israel lies deserted.

13 Even if only a tenth—a remnant—survive, it will be invaded again and burned. Israel will remain a stump, like a tree that is cut down, but the stump will be a holy seed that will grow again."

Isaiah speaks here of his encounter with the Holy God. He tells us how he was brought into the knowledge of being cleansed from sin, and how he heard and responded to the call of God to be His messenger to a rebellious people.

The year Uzziah died, 739 BC, was the beginning of Isaiah's prophetic ministry. Isaiah is transported to the throne room of Heaven by a vision and sees the Lord upon His throne. The Seraphim give praise to the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose glory is made evident in all creation. "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.*" The singing makes the whole Temple shake as if there were an earthquake. Isaiah is terrified and is sure he is going to die. The experience of someone actually seeing God would undoubtedly be a totally unsettling one and would undoubtedly make them acutely aware of their own unworthiness. It is difficult to say for certain exactly what Isaiah saw, but it is most likely that He saw Jesus on the throne because no one has seen God face to face (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16). When Isaiah saw himself in the light of the holiness of the Triune God, he was immediately overcome with his sinful nature.

In response to Isaiah's confession of sin in verse 5, one of the Seraphim took a burning coal from the altar of sacrifice and touched Isaiah's lips with it saying that **HIS SINS WERE FORGIVEN**. If one's lips are unclean, so is the heart. Some scholars believe this message is revealing that purification from sin and salvation comes through Him who would one day be the one offering for all sin throughout all of time. In other words that this scene represents that Jesus Christ is the One who will be the atoning sacrifice for sin when He goes to the cross. I like that kind of symbolism but I don't know that I would go that far in interpreting that message here. This vision of God's holiness vividly reminded Isaiah of his own unworthiness which deserved judgment. Isaiah's vision made him painfully aware of his sin and probably drove him to his knees in complete repentance. In this way God prepared him for his cleansing and commission as a prophet.

I believe this scene represents a picture of forgiveness and salvation. The hot coal taken from the altar of incense is representative of God's purifying work. It would seem that these verses are revealing to Isaiah that his sins are being forgiven, that he is being spiritually cleansed for special service to God, and that **SUCH FORGIVENESS CAN ONLY COME AS A GIFT FROM THE LORD**. Foretelling Jesus, the Messiah, as the only way to receive that gift will come soon enough in this book.

In verses 9-13 we see that Isaiah was commissioned to take this message to the people even though they would pay no attention either to him or his message. This message of truth would have no other effect on them but to harden them against it. Is God saying that He deliberately blinds people and condemns them? No, not at all. What He is saying is that the Word of God has this hardening and blinding effect on sinners who will not listen and yield to Him. Because of pride or stubbornness or both the truth found in the Bible makes unbelievers even more resistant. The sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay.

Christ Himself referred to Isaiah's words here. Let's read John 12:37-41, NIV:

*37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, **THEY STILL WOULD NOT BELIEVE IN HIM.***

*38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"*

*39 For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:*

*40 "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn--and I would heal them."*

*41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.*

Note the downward steps: They *would* not believe (v. 37); therefore, they *could* not believe (v. 39).

I know how Isaiah must have felt because that's the feeling I have when I invite people to

come and learn what God has to say through the Bible and they give me all kinds of reasons they don't want to. None of which by the way make much sense.

But Isaiah was simply told to carry the message and like all of God's servants, to know that the results of the mission must be left with God. Paul spoke of this when he spoke of being a sweet savor of Christ to God both in those who are saved and in those who perish (2 Corinthians 2:15). God is honored when His truth is preached, no matter what attitude the hearers take toward it, and that Word will not return void, but will accomplish the divine purpose (Isaiah 55:10,11).

Faced with the solemn responsibility of proclaiming so unpopular a message, Isaiah asked the Lord how long he would have to do this. It takes special faith and obedience to continue to preach to a hostile audience who are only hardened by the Word instead of being softened by it. And the Lord told Isaiah to preach the message until there were none left to hear it.

"The stump" in verse 13 refers to the remnant of the people of Israel that are left. It might amount to only 10% or less. But this **stump** or **remnant** will produce the "**Holy Seed**," which will one day produce the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Now let's observe the second person who had an encounter with the Holy God.

### Chapter 7

Isaiah 7:1-25 (NLT):

*1 During the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, Jerusalem was attacked by King Rezin of Aram (or Syria)<sup>2</sup> and King Pekah of Israel, the son of Remaliah. **The city withstood the attack, however, and was not taken.***

*2 The news had come to the royal court: "Aram is allied with Israel against us!" So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, just as trees shake in a storm.*

*3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet King Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub. You will find the king at the end of the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is bleached.*

*4 Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn't need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah.*

*5 "Yes, the kings of Aram and Israel are coming against you. They are saying,*

*6 'We will invade Judah and throw its people into panic. Then we will fight our way into Jerusalem and install the son of Tabeel as Judah's king.*

*7 "But this is what the Sovereign Lord says: This invasion will never happen,*

---

<sup>2</sup> Parentheses added.

8 because Aram is no stronger than its capital, Damascus. And Damascus is no stronger than its king, Rezin. **AS FOR ISRAEL, WITHIN SIXTY-FIVE YEARS IT WILL BE CRUSHED AND COMPLETELY DESTROYED.**

9 Israel is no stronger than its capital, Samaria. And Samaria is no stronger than its king, Pekah son of Remaliah. You do not believe me? If you want me to protect you, learn to believe what I say.”

10 Not long after this, the Lord sent this message to King Ahaz:

11 “Ask me for a sign, Ahaz, to prove that I will crush your enemies as I have promised. Ask for anything you like, and make it as difficult as you want.”

12 But the king refused. “No,” he said, “I wouldn’t test the Lord like that.”

13 Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! You aren’t satisfied to exhaust my patience. You exhaust the patience of God as well!

14 All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL—‘God is with us.’

15 By the time this child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will know enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong.

16 But before he knows right from wrong, the two kings you fear so much—the kings of Israel and Aram—will both be dead.

17 “The Lord will bring a terrible curse on you, your nation, and your family. You will soon experience greater terror than has been known in all the years since Solomon’s empire was divided into Israel and Judah. The mighty king of Assyria will come with his great army!”

18 In that day the Lord will whistle for the army of Upper Egypt and for the army of Assyria. They will swarm around you like flies. Like bees, they will sting and kill.

19 They will come in vast hordes, spreading across the whole land. They will settle in the fertile areas and also in the desolate valleys, caves, and thorny places.

20 In that day the Lord will take this “razor”—these Assyrians you have hired to protect you—and use it to shave off everything: your land, your crops, and your people.

21 When they finally stop plundering, a farmer will be fortunate to have a cow and two sheep left.

22 The few people still left in the land will live on curds and wild honey because that is all the land will produce.

23 In that day the lush vineyards, now worth as much as a thousand pieces of silver, will become patches of briars and thorns.

24 The entire land will be one vast brier patch, a hunting ground overrun by wildlife.

25 No one will go to the fertile hillsides where the gardens once grew, for briars and thorns will cover them. Cattle, sheep, and goats will graze there.

Now let's go back and take a closer look at these verses.

Isaiah 7:1,2 (NAS):

*1 In the days of Ahaz, son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it.*

*2 When the **house of David** heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.*

First some historical background:

“*In the days of Ahaz*” refers to the years 739-725 BC, when Ahaz reigned as king of Israel. The son of Jotham and the father of Hezekiah, Ahaz was the eleventh king of Judah. Only twenty years old at his succession, Ahaz is reported by Hebrew historians as having committed such abominable Canaanite practices as sacrificing his son and worshipping idols (2 Kings 16:1-4).<sup>3</sup>

In 735 **Rezin**, the king of Syria (740-732 BC) and **Pekah** (737-732 BC), the king of **Ephraim**, also referred to as **Israel**, tried to convince **Judah** under **King Ahaz** to become allied with them in an anti-Assyrian revolt. Assyria was the ruling world power at that time. Ahaz would have no part of it. There were undoubtedly a number of kingdoms involved in this anti-Assyrian revolt with Syria and Ephraim (Israel). But Judah stood alone and would not join the rest of the coalition in fighting Assyria. Israel had been one nation until the death of Solomon when the nation was divided into Israel in the North and Judah in the South. Galilee consists of a region in northern Israel.

Now Rezin and Pekah and their allies led their forces south against Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, in an attempt to overthrow Ahaz for not joining with them to stop the growing power of Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC), who was gobbling up nations one after another on his march westward toward the Mediterranean Sea. Rezin and Pekah hoped to conquer Judah and replace King Ahaz with a puppet king by the name of **ben Tabeel**, whom they could manipulate to become their ally in the fight against Assyria.

Verse 2 describes the terror felt by the citizens of Jerusalem including the king. When Ahaz learned of this conspiracy against him, both he and the people of Jerusalem were filled with fear. Ahaz did not believe his conduct as king would allow for the divine intervention by God on his behalf as well as the people of Judah. The “*house of David*” in verse 2 reminds us of the significance of Satan’s attempt here to destroy the Davidic dynasty or line from which would come the Savior, Jesus Christ. If Ahaz had been overthrown it would have made it impossible for God’s promise of such a Savior to come through the line of David. But we know that God controls all of history and He was not about to allow anyone to cause His promise to be broken.

<sup>3</sup> Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. 1985. Harper's Bible dictionary. Includes index. (1st ed.) . Harper & Row: San Francisco.

According to the journals of Tiglath-Pileser himself, the king of Assyria, Ahaz sent messengers to him with gifts of incredible value of gold and silver which Ahaz had taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem. These gifts were in effect a bribe to get the Assyrians to protect Judah from this alliance between Pekah and Rezin. For the time being Pileser agreed to Ahaz's terms. In 733 BC the Assyrians attacked and captured **Galilee**, the northern part of the nation of Israel, and in the following year **Damascus**, the capital of **Syria**, and killed **Rezin**. The account of the battle is found in 2 Kings 16:7-9; 15:29:

*7 King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria with this message: "I am your servant and your vassal. Come up and rescue me from the attacking armies of Aram and Israel."*

*8 Then Ahaz took the silver and gold from the Temple of the Lord and the palace treasury and sent it as a gift to the Assyrian king.*

*9 So the Assyrians attacked the Aramean capital of Damascus and led its population away as captives, resettling them in Kir. They also killed King Rezin.*

*29 During his reign, King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria attacked Israel again, and he captured the towns of Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. He also conquered the regions of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali, and he took the people to Assyria as captives.*

Ahaz negotiated away Jerusalem's freedom and all the gold, silver, and precious stones in God's Temple because he was afraid the city would be destroyed by foreign armies. Having survived, Ahaz traveled to Damascus to meet the Assyrian king in person (2 Kings 16:10). Occasional revolts and Assyrian reprisals continued to the end of the century, ending in the destruction of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC by Sargon who was then leader of Assyria.

But there is much more to the story. Ahaz could have saved Jerusalem by a simple act of faith and trust because just as soon as all these events began to take shape, God took action and through Isaiah offered to help Ahaz.

Isaiah 7:3:

*3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub (a remnant shall return)<sup>4</sup>, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field,*

God sent Isaiah and his son, who had been given a name as a prophecy for the future of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, into this situation to speak with King Ahaz as soon as Pekah and Rezin threatened him. God wanted to give Ahaz a word of encouragement. It is suggested in these verses that Ahaz was out inspecting the city's water supply in preparation for an attack when he should have been down on his knees turning to God for help. What is our first response to problems in our own lives? Do we first call our lawyer,

<sup>4</sup> Parentheses added.

accountant, counselor, family or friends, or do we take it immediately to God? God wanted to help Ahaz and he wants to help us. But He wants us to come to Him in prayer **FIRST**. He may then send us to some of his earthly helpers to solve the problem.

God speaks to Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah. God makes some wonderful promises to soothe Ahaz's great anxiety: "*Be calm, Ahaz, and do not be afraid because the thing threatened by the enemy country **will not happen.***" Wow! When you are facing what seems to be great problems or certain disaster, how would you feel if God sent you a direct promise that the thing you were afraid of would not happen? What would that do to your anxiety level? But God also made His promise to Ahaz dependent on something. Let's read verses 4-9, which contain the words of Isaiah's prophecy beginning and ending with a call to faith:

*4 and say to him (God is telling Isaiah to say the following to Ahaz)<sup>5</sup>, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.*

*5 Because Aram—with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil against you, saying,*

*6 Let us go up against Judah and cut off Jerusalem and conquer it for ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in it;*

*7 therefore thus says the Lord God: It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.*

*8 For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. (Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people.)*

*9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.*

God tells Ahaz there is **no way** He is going to allow any foreign power to overrun Jerusalem at this time. Isaiah tells Ahaz not to be afraid of these two kings from Syria and Ephraim who are no more to be feared than the tail-end of a smoldering torch. They will be handled easily. God wanted Ahaz to trust in Him rather than Assyria. God points out that the Syrian-Ephraim alliance is no more than two mere mortals. God had already decreed the destruction of these nations along with their plan to establish their own puppet ruler over Judah and Jerusalem. God says, however, that the destruction won't come immediately for Syria and Israel, and that Judah **would not** be conquered. Fulfillment of this prophecy came within sixty-five years when foreigners took possession of both Syria and Israel, that it might be forever said that Ephraim was broken so as no longer to be a people (verse 8). The people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were scattered to the four corners of the world.

Although Israel was conquered by Assyria in 732 BC, the "*shattering*" referred to in verse 8 was not complete until 669 BC when a huge number of Assyrians were relocated into Damascus by Ashurbanipal.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



God is telling Ahaz through Isaiah that “*If you don’t stand with Me, you won’t stand at all.*” To stand firm in faith is to trust and to believe in God. The last part of verse 9 challenged Ahaz to believe what Isaiah was telling him. Obviously Ahaz would not be alive in sixty-five years. But he could have faith that God would fulfill both predictions:

1. That Israel would be shattered sixty-five years later, and
2. That in **his day** the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria (Aram) **would not** overpower Judah.

If he did not believe those predictions, he along with the nation of Judah would suffer as well. God was telling Ahaz that if he didn’t trust in God alone, Ahaz’s fate would be similar to Pekah and Rezin’s, the leaders of Israel and Syria. Although Judah was not conquered for another 100 years, Ahaz, by his lack of trust in God, caused Judah to become the equivalent of a slave state to Assyria.

God wanted Ahaz to trust in Him alone and know that he does not need to go to the Assyrians for help.

Isaiah 7:10,11:

*10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying,  
11 Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.*

When God speaks to Ahaz through Isaiah, God is basically saying to Ahaz, “*If you don’t believe Me, then ask Me for a sign to prove to you this Word is true. I’ll do whatever you ask to prove to you that you can trust me in this matter.*” Verse 11 makes it clear that whether Ahaz likes it or not he’s going to be given something pretty spectacular by way of a sign to prove that what God promised He would deliver.

Isaiah 7:12:

*12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.*

Whereas Isaiah’s encounter with a holy God caused him to fall to his knees in true humility, Ahaz stands upright and displays a pseudo or pretend humility. Ahaz is being given a wonderful opportunity, but he blows it. God was willing to perform the most extraordinary miracle as a sign to Ahaz that Ahaz could trust God. Ahaz responds to God’s offer with a counterfeit piety, here drawing on Deuteronomy 6:16, which states it is wrong to put God to the test. The real reason, however, that he doesn’t want a sign is that he doesn’t want to follow God’s advice. He doesn’t want to do what God has told him to do. Ahaz preferred to worship idols and to say, “*No thanks, I’ll do it myself.*” How pig-headed can a person be?

God then gives Isaiah the words to say in response to Ahaz’s refusal to ask for a sign, Isaiah 7:13-16:

13 Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, **O HOUSE OF DAVID!** *Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?*

14 Therefore *the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, **THE YOUNG WOMAN IS WITH CHILD** and shall bear a son, and SHALL NAME HIM **IMMANUEL.***

15 *He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.*

16 *For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.*

The pretended humility of Ahaz was offensive to God. While it is true that the subject of asking for signs is a topic for discussion in itself, and it is usually best not to test God by asking Him for signs; nevertheless, if God tells you to ask for a sign, then you better do it. God, who is all-powerful, might have given any sign that was asked. But Ahaz refused. Ahaz’s refusal to obey God and ask for a sign is just yet another event in the entire nation’s long history of disobedience and idolatry. So God then directs his comments to the whole faithless “*House of David,*” which includes the entire Jewish nation of both Israel and Judah. They were all guilty of angering God.

Therefore Isaiah went on to say that the Lord Himself would decide on what sign would be given to Isaiah. A virgin would conceive and give birth to a son and call Him Immanuel, meaning *God with us.* God was looking beyond the situation at hand regarding the threatened invasion of the land. God was looking ahead several centuries to the central event of the Bible.

God was preparing to give the people a sign by which they would know the Messiah had been born. He would be born of a virgin and the virgin’s son was to be God in the flesh. The fulfillment of this sign would be the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, some 700 hundred years later. God’s audience here was much larger than just Ahaz. “*You*” in verses 13 and 14 is plural. God is now referring to the entire Jewish nation. God is telling them clearly what to look for in the future and how to know for certain when the Messiah comes.

Verses 14-16 has to be one of the most difficult passages of the Bible to interpret. The boy mentioned here is to serve as a *type* of the promised Son of the virgin and is undoubtedly Isaiah’s own son yet to be born, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:1-3). A Jewish boy became barmitzvah, a “son of the commandment,” at 12 or 13 years of age. At this time he was considered a moral adult, responsible enough for his own acts to reject wrong and choose right. Thus the sign proving Isaiah’s words about the salvation to be won by Immanuel would be the destruction of Israel and Syria by Assyria within a dozen years. And this is exactly what happened, for by 722 B.C., just thirteen years after Ahaz became king, the two lands he feared lay in waste. This sign was ultimately fulfilled 700 years later in Matthew 1:20-23:

20 *As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared*

*to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

*21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

*22 All of this happened to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:*

*23 “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us).”*

**In Isaiah 7:17-25** the severity of the punishment on both Israel and Judah is foretold. The instrument of the punishment was to be the king of Assyria, **whom Ahaz trusted instead of the Lord**, and he therefore would desolate the land:

*17 The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”*

*18 On that day the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.*

*19 And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorn bushes, and on all the pastures.*

*20 On that day the Lord will shave with a razor hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will take off the beard as well.*

*21 On that day one will keep alive a young cow and two sheep,*

*22 and will eat curds because of the abundance of milk that they give; for everyone that is left in the land shall eat curds and honey.*

*23 On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns.*

*24 With bow and arrows one will go there, for all the land will be briers and thorns;*

*25 and as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.*

Not only did God use the Assyrians to judge the Northern kingdom of Israel, He also used them to invade Ahaz’s domain in Judah. The desolation prophesied in this section began in the days of Ahaz and reached its climax when the Babylonians conquered Judah. And its results will continue right up to the time Jesus will return to deliver Israel and establish His kingdom on earth.

The reference to flies and bees in verse 18 has to do with the fact that Egypt was full of flies and Assyria was known for beekeeping. These insects represented the armies from these powerful countries, which the Lord would summon to overrun Judah and take the people into exile. The Assyrians were the Lord’s hired blade to shave and disgrace the entire body of Judah. This foreign invasion would totally change the economy. Where

once there were abundant fields lush with agricultural growth, there would now be only some weeds and stubble on which cattle and sheep would graze. It would be a time of great poverty, as briers and thorns are a sign of desolation. Although Jerusalem was not destroyed, almost all of Judah was.

We've now looked at two encounters with God, the Holy One: Isaiah and Ahaz. But what happens when you encounter the Holy One? Oh, you don't think you do, simply because you haven't had a heavenly vision or a direct word from God? I have to say you are wrong. You are right now having an encounter with God the Holy One. He is giving you His direct Word through the Scripture and through this morning's message. What questions is He asking you: "*Do I have your attention? Do I have your whole heart? Am I number one in your life? Can I count on you to serve Me in whatever way I ask? Will you seek My guidance every day by spending time in the Bible and praying?*" Or perhaps His question to you is more personal and He is speaking it deep in your heart.

And what is your response to the holiness of God and to His question to you? Will you be like Isaiah and obey humbly? Or will you be like Ahaz and give a response of false humility and disobedience? Remember this, no matter how bad your sin, if you turn to God, give Him your heart and your love, and follow Him obediently, then He will bless you. There are only two possible responses to an encounter with the Holy God of heaven: falling on your knees and receiving Him or rejecting Him and walking away. Which one do you choose?