

ISAIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Isaiah chapter 5 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In this chapter Isaiah opens up with a song of how God brought forth the nation of Israel and its focus is primarily Judah but it does relate to the nation as a whole. The problem was they had the right information but they never let that information transform their lives. We might say they were “playing church.” They went through with the many rituals but they never had that relationship. They went to church but they lived like the devil. And we will see that because after this song we see a series of six “**woes**” upon the nation for their rejection of God and what it has done in their life, the judgment that has come out of this.

Paul said in II Corinthians 6:1, “**We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.**” Yes the grace of God is a free gift that we receive by faith not because we deserve it! Then how can we receive it in vain? Because you may accept God’s grace, you may be aware of God’s grace but you have not received it into your life and thus, there is no transformation.

You can say that you are a Christian from now until the Lord comes back but if there is no evidence to support that, if you are not living what you say you believe, then I seriously doubt that you are a Christian. James reminds us, “**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**” James 1:22. I think there are many out there who are deceived. They have said a prayer and they think that they are saved but they are living like the devil and thus, they may hear the Word of God but they don’t obey the Word of God, there is no evidence for their faith, there is no transformation, and they are deceived.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Isaiah chapter 5 starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word this evening.

ISAIAH 5

VERSES 1-4

1. As this song opens up we see that it is being sung to the Lord, Yahweh or my "**Well beloved.**" The focus is on God's vineyard or the nation of Israel, primarily the Southern Kingdom of Judah and it speaks of how God has brought forth this vineyard, brought it to life.

God planted them on Mount Zion and provided protection, nourishment, rich and fertile land with the expectation they would produce good fruit. That just makes sense. You spend time clearing the land, getting rid of the rocks, getting rid of the weeds, making the land ready for planting and then you plant your vineyard and with all the work that was put into it, giving it the best chance to bring forth good fruit, it does just the opposite!

And please understand that when Isaiah speaks of "**wild grapes**" he is speaking of foul-smelling, stinking grapes. They were not just wild but they were rancid! We see this played out for us in Jeremiah 2:21-22 as the Lord tells us through Jeremiah, "**Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me,' says the Lord God.**"

2. Is it God's fault? Maybe He didn't do enough? Maybe there was something more He could have done? In fact, as you come to verse 3 you see only two possibilities regarding whose fault it is. It is either God's fault, He did something wrong, or it is the problem with the vineyard or the people, it is their fault! But as you come to verse 4 you clearly see that God is saying there was nothing else that He could do for His people except to make His people into robots, which He would not do. He did everything possible and thus, it was their fault for not producing good grapes!

3. Now as we look at our own lives how are we doing? Did God not cultivate our lives enough to produce good fruit? No, once again the problem is not with God it is with us. Maybe you are thinking, "If I only had more time! If I only had more money! If I only had a better wife/husband! If only I were married! If only I were single! If only my job weren't so demanding! Then I would really live for the Lord!"

Do you know what that is? That is an excuse or excuses because there will always be, "If only this or if only that . . ." Hasn't God given to you all that you need to produce fruit in your lives, to be fruitful? Absolutely and if you doubt that listen to what Peter tells us in II Peter 1:2-4, **"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."**

So it is not God's fault that we are not producing fruit in our lives, it is our fault because of the way we are living, just as it was with Judah. All the love, care, time, work, and investment had no results in the life of the nation and I guess the question can be asked, "Has all the love, care, time, work and investment that God has done in your life had any results?"

For us as Christians, to produce good fruit, we must stay in contact with the vine, Jesus Christ. That means we need to live a life that is filled with the obedience to God and His Word, love for Him and others, the worship of Him, our service unto Him! Now you may be thinking that what I am saying is putting us under the Law and you thought it was grace. It is but if you are not living what you say you believe then that is an empty faith as I have said.

Remember what Jesus said in John 15:4-8, "**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**"

Fruit bearing is the evidence for our faith, it does not save us but it shows that we are saved. Think about an apple tree; is it really an apple tree if it doesn't produce apples? In fact, prior to apple production you may not recognize what kind of tree it is. The same is true with our faith, the evidence for our faith, how we live just shows that we belong to Him!

Meyer put it like this, “It will be seen then . . . that every soul of man had the chance of becoming a fruitful vineyard; and if it became the reverse, it was due to no failure in either the wisdom or grace of God.”

Spurgeon also made these comments regarding what God has done and thus, our responsibility to what He has done in our lives, to live for Him. He wrote, “O 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?” May we live for Him!

4. Now because they produced “**wild grapes**” God is now going to speak of what He will do to them. Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 5-7

1. Notice that this judgment came upon them because they did not produce good grapes but wild grapes. And we see that God steps back and as He lets go of them we then see His judgment poured out. They were going to be taken into captivity, the land would be desolate, dry, weeds and thorns would grow instead of crops. And that is exactly what happened as the Babylonians came in and took them captive and destroyed the land.

2. Let me also say this. The vineyard resisted God, the protested against God! What do I mean by that? They did not like the “**pruning.**” They did not like the “**digging.**” They did not like the “**watering**” that the Lord was doing. So the Lord steps back, “No more pruning, no more digging, no more watering. Now see if this is better for you!”

And of course it was not better for them. Judgment came as a result of their turning from God. And what flowed from their lives, some of the bad fruit we will see as we move on but an overview you might say is as follows. God planted them so that they might bring forth justice but instead they oppressed the people. God planted them so that righteousness may fill the land but instead we see weeping over the unrighteousness that is being produced! The land was filled with violence. That is the rotten fruit that was produced and that is why judgment came upon them!

Now we may not like what God is doing in our lives but I think we need to realize He does what is best to produce the finest fruit in our lives. And as difficult as the pruning and digging and watering may be, it is far worse if the Lord stepped back and stopped doing those things in our lives!

3. Now we are going to see six woes that God pronounces against Judah, and when God says “**woe**” to a people, you better watch out! Also, six is the number of man or incompleteness. Thus, these people who were not walking with God were imperfect and judgment was going to come upon this imperfection. You see, the only thing that would make them complete was God and they turned their backs on Him.

VERSES 8-10

1. Here we have the first woe or the first bunch of wild grapes you might say. And this first woe deals with **GREED** and what we see happening here is greedy real estate buying, taking advantage of people. In other words, the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer and that should not have been the case with God’s people!

We are warned in Micah 2:1-2, **“Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.”**

That is what was going on and keep in mind that Micah was a prophet during this period of time. Now in the New Testament we are also warned of covetousness, of greed. In Colossians 3:5-7 we are told, **“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.”**

Did you notice that Paul said covetousness is idolatry! When Paul speaks of covetousness or greed this is truly where the other sins that Paul spoke of spring forth. It is a selfish desire and thus, it is idolatry. The focus is that what you want becomes an idol in your life and you have to have it! Greed works that way and it takes from others to satisfy you and God is judging Judah for it!

2. Because of their greed all those homes they bought will be empty when they are taken into captivity. The land will not produce as it should because of their greed. Ten acres of land should produce some 4,000 gallons of grape juice, but it will only produce some 6 gallons. You will plant 6 bushels of seed and only get 1/10th of a crop out of it. Their greed has left them barren! It is as Spurgeon wrote, “When men are covetous after the things of this world, God has a way of making them to be filled with disappointment and with bitterness.”

VERSES 11-17

1. We now see this second woe or the second bunch of wild grapes. And this second woe deals with **HEDONISM** or pleasure seeking! And get this picture in your mind because this is what Isaiah is speaking of. The picture is of those who “work hard” to party and endlessly celebrate. They are living for the weekend or really to party anytime and anywhere! Their lives are filled with substance abuse and ungodly music. Now what is wrong with that? “Joe, aren’t you going overboard on this one?”

No I am not. Why is this lifestyle wrong? Because “**. . . they do not regard the work of the LORD, Nor consider the operation of His hands.**” Isaiah 5:12. In other words, this lifestyle is not consistent with a life in the Lord and thus, they pushed Him aside and went seeking after pleasure, drugs, just a wild life, there is no self-control!

2. The consequences of this kind of lifestyle is the judgment of God will come upon them! “**Therefore my people have gone into captivity . . .**” Isaiah 5:13. They are so consumed with this kind of lifestyle that they have no knowledge of God. Spiritually speaking they are starving to death and yet they still refuse to partake of the bread of God, His Word. It is a mentality that seeks to satisfy the flesh and not the spirit, and they are never satisfied.

And think about it, Sheol, Hell is never satisfied, there is always room for more. And because they refused to seek the truth, they will party till the very end; they will party all the way to Hell and then have an eternity to think about the foolishness of their ways!

Make no mistake about it; even in judgment many times man is prideful. Man loves to exalt himself. Let me give you one example to show you what I mean. On Monday, June 11, 2001 Timothy McVeigh, before being executed for blowing up the Federal Building, quoted *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley, a poem published in 1875, for his last words. The poem was duplicated exactly in his handwriting and given to the warden at the federal death house in Terre Haute, Indiana. These are those words he left behind,

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

- William Ernest Henley, 1875

You see, no remorse, no repentance but an arrogance and defiance that show's he had no fear of God although he was soon to stand before Him in his sin! That is pride even when judgment was right before him. But one second after he passed from this life into the next I will guarantee you that he was not saying any longer, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul."

As much as a person may boast and brag now, in the end they will not be able to stand before God, their pride will be brought down and God will be lifted up! As James 4:10 says, **"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."**

VERSES 18-19

1. We now see this third woe or the third bunch of wild grapes. And this third woe deals with ***LIBERALISM***. It is an attitude of anything and everything goes. There is no shame in their sin but they display it for all to see. And notice the picture that Isaiah is painting here. It is that of a heavy wagon being pulled, not by horses but by people and they are straining with all their might!

What is on this cart that makes it so heavy? Sin makes this cart heavy and difficult to pull, and I don't care what anyone says, sin is a heavy burden upon people's lives. Then why do people get involved in sin? Because people are deceived, they think that it will bring them what they want and thus, they keep getting farther and farther into sin and they are still not satisfied.

And this kind of liberal thinking is permeating our society. My wife was just listening to the news this week and they had a report on getting homosexuals out of that lifestyle and how that was wrong, because, as the opening remark stated, "Homosexuality is not a sin!" I wonder how they know that it is not a sin? They speak as though they are God, but they are not! God's Word is very clear; homosexuality is a sin no matter what man has to say!

And as much as sin makes life better, at least that is the way they feel, it ends up being a drag, it ends up being a heavy weight and yet people are still going down that path, being led there by their own debased mind and the teachings of others who have a debased mind! If it feels good then just do it is the mentality!

Calvin wrote, "They flatter themselves by imagining that what is sin is not sin, or by some excuse or idle pretense they lessen its enormity. These, then, are *corde*s, wicked *ropes*, by which they *draw iniquity*."

And in their pride they feel that God can't do anything about their sin or He doesn't care about their sin or, even worse, He is accepting of their sin! And their rational goes something like this, "If God didn't accept this, if it was wrong, He would do something about it, wouldn't He?" They are wrong, He does not accept sin, He condemns sin, He hates sin and man will be judged for His sin!

In saying these empty words they show their arrogant contempt of the LORD. It is as if they are saying, "Go ahead, God. We are ready for your judgment." No one is ever ready but once it begins, it is too late!

VERSE 20

1. We now see this fourth woe or the fourth bunch of wild grapes. And this fourth woe deals with ***RELATIVISM***. What does that mean? It is speaking of the lack of absolutes. In other words, what is right for you may not be right for me and that is okay! You can't really say what is right or what is wrong anymore. Light is dark and dark is light or as Isaiah put it, those that **"call evil good, and good evil."**

One writer put it like this,

However contrary to reason and experience, we find ways to rationalize sin. We redefine it. We change the labels. It is possible to lose one's sense of taste, the taste of the heart, not by age or injury but by choice, by rejecting the law of the Lord and despising the word of the Holy One (v.24). If we do not discover sweet to be sweet but insist that reality be redesigned so that our taste for bitter can not only be satisfied but ***called*** sweet, how can the grace of God thrive under those conditions? Do we enjoy the right things? Do we call good and evil by their true names? Or is that passé?

- Raymond Ortlund, Jr., Isaiah, p. 71

That is exactly right and we have seen our society flourish in this kind of thinking and it is leading us down a very dark road away from God! When we come to the conclusion that everything is relative then everything gets turned around and we start calling evil good and good evil, just like we are doing today! Just like Judah we are using clever and deceptive words to blur moral issues and excuse our sin.

2. We have turned things around so far in this country that the evil person is not the one committing the sin but the one who is exposing the sin! And even in the church we have developed committees; we have meetings to determine if something is right or wrong. Why do we need to do that? Because we don't believe what God has said in His Word! If we did then we would know that God has already told us what is right and what is wrong, what is a sin and what is not a sin!

Make no mistake about it; the end does not justify the means. If it did, if we had that kind of mentality, then you could defend Hitler's actions as being good. How can I say that? Because he killed off the weaker people, he killed off those that he felt did not meet his standards.

And yes, you may not agree with that but in the age of relativism, there is no right or wrongs, thus, you can't judge him for what he has done. In his eyes, he was right. And if you think that kind of logic is farfetched, listen to what one professor said regarding what the students in his class feel, what relativism has done, and as you will see, they have learned this lesson very well.

He said regarding his students, "They accept the reality of the Holocaust, but they believe themselves unable to morally condemn it, or indeed to make any moral judgments whatsoever. Such students typically comment that they themselves deplore the Holocaust and other great evils, but then they wind up by suspending moral judgment."

What that means is that they refuse to take a stand; they don't want to be considered intolerant of others views, as atrocious as they may be. You see, there is always a moral inversion with relativism, and we see that today in our own country and it is dark and it is bitter tasting!

VERSE 21

1. We now see this fifth woe or the fifth bunch of wild grapes. And this fifth woe deals with *INTELLECTUALISM*. It is speaking of self-confidence! When you hear of man's prideful boasting of how smart he is and how they mock God, they are showing themselves to be nothing more than fools. By being filled with pride they are rejecting the wisdom and the standards of God for their lives!

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "Sin is very clever; it always brings forward its reasons, its arguments. Sin knows us so well; it knows that we like to think of ourselves as highly intelligent people. So it does not just tell us, 'Do this'; it gives us reasons for doing it, and they appear to be so wonderful. But the whole point is that in reality they are specious [baseless]; they are empty and foolish. The reasoning is always false reasoning. The arguments are always wrong." (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *A Nation Under Wrath: Studies in Isaiah 5*, p. 75).

Then how do we know what is right? We are told in Proverbs 30:5-6 says, "**Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.**" There you go, trust in God's Word and don't add to it, don't take away from it because in the end you will be found wrong because God is always right! If you disagree with that you must think you are smarter than God and you are not, make no mistake about it!

VERSES 22-23

1. We now see this sixth woe or the sixth bunch of wild grapes. And this sixth woe deals with ***THE PERVERSION OF JUSTICE***. And we see the corruption of society's elite as well as the breakdown of social justice. And make no mistake about it; they go hand in hand because personal sin cannot remain just a private matter.

Let me show you how the sin of others affects our social justice. This is from Time magazine dated September 14, 1998. These are letters that people sent in regarding what President Clinton did with Monica Lewinsky. Just listen to what they said and you tell me if his actions did not affect their behavior, their thinking.

“America should be happy to have a human being, not a robot, as President.”

“Clinton was unfaithful and lied to cover it up, just as thousands of others have done. Then he told people who were snooping around to mind their own business. Good for him.”

“I, like President Clinton, will do anything to avoid the prying eyes of self-righteous demons like Starr and his horde, who show such utter contempt for privacy.”

And think about homosexuality, adultery, drug abuse, alcoholism, stealing, and-so-on and how we are downplaying these things as a sin and we are then putting them into the mainstream of society, we legalize sin!

In Proverbs 29:2 we are told, **“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.”** They groan because of the injustice that is taking place in the land. But on the other end of the spectrum we see social justice flourish when people have such a sense of God that they embrace life as a meaningful whole, and that is a benefit to everyone!

VERSES 24-30

1. In these verses we see two “**Therefore**” and they link back to the six sins or woes that Judah was committing against God. But what is the root of their problem, what brought them to this place where God is bringing judgment upon them? Listen carefully, “**... Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.**”
Isaiah 5:24.

It is not that God did not delight in them, that was not the problem. They did not delight in Him and that is the problem! And when a people move away from God they go down, they deteriorate into sinfulness and the end result is judgment as we see here! When a people, when a nation moves away from God’s Word they have lost their moral compass and they will be lost. We are a nation that is lost, wandering to and fro and we are in trouble. The solution is to turn back to God and His Word!

2. The second “**Therefore**” is found in verse 25 and this is speaking of the judgment that is coming because of their rejection of Him! Now is this judgment coming from the Assyrians? Possibly but ultimately it is speaking of Babylon who will destroy Jerusalem and burn down the Temple taking the people captive to Babylon!

This nation that was to bring forth good fruit, this nation that was to be a light to the lost world, was bringing forth rancid fruit and because of that they are in darkness as verse 30 tells us!

3. In regards to not only Judah and what they would face for their sin, for turning from the Lord, but also to us as Christians, W. E. Vine wrote this, that “All has its warning against [the] departure from the Word of God, and against the adoption of evil practices, the inevitable result of such departure. So it has been in the history of Christendom. All must meet with Divine retribution at the hands of the nations. For this see Rev. 17:16-18. God in His grace has left nothing undone to enable us to be fruitful for His glory, by His Spirit and His Word. Once we turn from this we not only become unfruitful but open our hearts to many forms of evil, and ‘judgment must begin at the House of God.’”

May we not receive the grace of God in vain but allow God’s grace to fill our lives and transform our lives. Grace must be received in that it touches our lives and we live out what we say we believe. Empty faith, vain faith is just that, it is empty because you are not filled with God, you are not saved!

ISAIAH 6

VERSES 1-2

1. King Uzziah was a good king for most of his life as he reigned in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. We are told in II Kings 15:3 that King Uzziah, “**... did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done.**” And for 52 years he led the nation to the point of being a military power, economically they were strong, the land was fertile, he invented military weapons and had strong military leaders, they were able to gain territory from their enemies even having them pay a tribute tax to Judah.

But then we are told that towards the end of his life pride brought him down. We see this spoken of in II Chronicles 26:16-21, **“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. So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord - valiant men. And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, ‘It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the Lord God.’ Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. Then Jotham his son was over the king’s house, judging the people of the land.”**

Isaiah and the rest of the nation grew up under the leadership of a great man and they probably looked to this man instead of the Lord for security, for strength. And when Uzziah became complacent with his relationship with the Lord so did the nation. Then, when he died it was kind of like the end of an era. It was like what took place in Europe in 1914 as they were thrown into World War I. All those times of prosperity in Europe were being cast aside and as Sir Edward Grey saw what had taken place, the significance of it, he wrote, “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.”

When King Uzziah died it was like the light of the nation was going out. It was a defining moment for Isaiah because we are told that **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.”** As this earthly King was dead Isaiah saw the Sovereign King reigning, his eyes were open to the true King who is seated upon the throne! I believe it is here that we see the ministry of Isaiah begin, in the year that King Uzziah died he saw the Lord!

2. Maybe that is where you are at this evening. Maybe you have placed a Uzziah on the throne in your life! Maybe you have placed someone or something on this throne and that situation died, that hope is now lost, there is no more life and the throne is empty and so are you. Maybe the Lord has brought you to this point so that you will look up instead of outward and see that He is seated upon the throne, He is high and lifted up, and His glory fills the Temple. He is not dead but alive and thus, we have to let go, put to death in a sense those things we have put on the throne of our lives so we may see the Lord high and lifted up!

What do I mean by this “Uzziah” in your life? Think of it like this. Your Uzziah might be a godly mentor, a vibrant church, a saintly friend. But until your Uzziah is less important to you than the Lord is, you’ll never really see Him. Don’t fix your eyes upon a fellowship, a ministry, or a man. Your eyes need to be on the Lord Jesus Christ alone. And, because He wants to fill you with a vision of Himself, your Uzziah will die in one way or another. That is the only way you will see the Lord, by removing all those other things that are blocking your view of Him as Isaiah did or I guess had done to him as this earthly King died!

3. The Seraphim are one of God's created angelic beings, not the same as Cherubim. The Cherubim are around the throne of God, while the Seraphim are above the throne of God. Their name, Seraphim, means "the burning ones."

Spurgeon had this to say regarding these Seraphim, "Thus they 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' feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving, so must sacred reverence take the first place, and energetic service follow in due course."

VERSES 3-4

1. Notice what these Seraphim don't say, "Love, love, love, love is all you need!" Please understand that I am not downplaying God's love because it is rich and it is deep. But what happens today is that many just want to focus on God's love. And in doing so they place God's love above all His other attributes or they just focus on God's love and ignore everything else.

The problem is you can't pick and choose what you like and what you dislike. Yes God's love is rich and deep as I have said. His grace is abounding. He is rich in mercy. But what about His righteousness, His Justice and you can go on-and-on speaking of God's multifaceted attributes. But if you could just pick one, out of all the others, His holiness would have to stand out. That is why these Seraphim are crying out, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts.**"

“**Holy**” in the Greek is HAGIOS, which speaks of being set apart. We, as Christians are to be set apart for God. But in respect to God, it speaks of his perfection, that there is no darkness, no sin in Him at all.

In Psalm 29:2 we see the *splendor* of God’s holiness, “**Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**” Then, in Exodus 15:11 we see the *majesty* of God’s holiness, “**Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?**” And in Isaiah 40:25 we see the *incomparability* of God’s holiness, “**To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?’ says the Holy One.**”

Then, in I John 1:5 we see John sum this up for us when he says, “**This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**” Thus, because God is holy and can’t look upon sin, we see His love for us, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**” John 3:16.

2. Why do they shout out, “**Holy, holy, holy**”? I think it is giving to us a picture of the Triune God, the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

3. Now why do we see the throne of God in heaven filled with smoke? The reason there is this smoke is that it is representing the presence of God, the *SHEKINAH* glory. And as these Seraphim shouted out the holiness of God the whole place shook and vibrated. This was not just an unemotional, monotone proclamation, they sung out what they saw, the holiness of God with passion in their voices!

VERSE 5

1. As Isaiah gets this vision of the Lord why does he see himself as destroyed, cut off, doomed to die? Because he saw the holiness of God and he saw himself and how far short he came when compared to God. And any time sinful man has an encounter with God, this is the reality, they are undone!

Prior to this maybe this was Isaiah's problem because in chapters 1 through 5 he is speaking of the sins of the people, how they have fallen away from God. And as Isaiah placed his spiritual condition next to the people of Judah he felt pretty good about himself. He was clean in his own eyes until he came before a holy God, and then he saw himself just as he needed to see himself - *UNCLEAN!*

Not only is the nation in this condition, but so too is Isaiah. And it is after this we see the ministry of Isaiah begin because, as Spurgeon reminds us, "God will never do anything with us till he has first of all undone us."

2. Now just recognizing this condition would be depressing. But God does not leave us there. Let's read on and see what takes place.

VERSES 6-7

1. First of all Isaiah recognized his sinful condition and as he does we see God bring to him the cleansing, the atonement for his sins! And we see this take place as the Seraphim take a "**live coal**" from the brazen altar or the altar of sacrifice, and he touches Isaiah's mouth with it cleansing him.

2. The problem is that many refuse to recognize their sinful condition, and if you do, there will be no healing for you. Jesus said in Matthew 5:3-5, “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**”

You must see the reality of sin in your life, that you are poor in spirit. You must mourn and repent over your sin, turn to God. And as you do then God will transform you into a new creation in Christ. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary, when applied to your life, cleanses you. That burning coal symbolizes the finished work of Christ on the cross! You see, the joy is not found in the sin, but in our Savior!

VERSE 8

1. Now don't get the idea that God didn't know who He was going to send into this ministry. God is giving Isaiah an opportunity to step forward, take a step of faith, and go where God is leading. Obviously it is not always easy, but if God is calling it is the best thing we can do. I like the way that Vine put it. He said, “There is no task laid upon us by the Lord which we shall not have power from Him to fulfill, when everything that would hinder our communion with Him has been removed.”

Now what created this kind of heart in Isaiah that when the Lord called he was ready to go forward and serve Him? First, he had a heart that had been in the *presence of God*. He had a heart that knew *his own sinfulness*. He had a heart that *knew the need among the people*, the need for God's word. He had a heart that had *been touched by God's cleansing fire*. And he had a heart that *heard God's heart to reach the nations*. And it is out of that we see him say, “**Here am I! Send me.**” May we have that same kind of heart that is willing to go as God leads!

2. One more point here and this is important. God says, “**And who shall go for Us?**” Who is He speaking of? Not the Seraphim or any other created being. I see this, as in Genesis 1:26, as a picture of the Trinity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And I know some like to argue that the word “Trinity” is not used in the Bible, but either is “missionary” and yet both those ideas are definitely implied by the Scriptures.

A beautiful picture of the Trinity is seen in Matthew 3:16-17 where we read, “**When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’**” The word may not be used but the picture is definitely painted for us!

VERSES 9-10

1. Isaiah is ready to go, “**Here am I! Send me**” and God says to go and speak to the people of the coming judgment. And it seems like God is making it so that they can’t understand. First of all, in understanding who God is we know that can’t be true. Then what does it mean? It means if you refuse to hear the message of God then you will not hear it, your ears will be closed to the truth and thus, judgment will come upon you.

Listen carefully to what one writer had to say how this relates to us. He wrote,

Every time you hear the Word of God preached, you come away from that exposure to his truth either a little closer to God or a little further away from God, either more softened toward God or more hardened toward God. But you are never just the same. And if you think you can hold the gospel at arm's length in critical detachment, that very posture reveals that you are already deadened. The same truth enlivening someone else is hardening you.

- Raymond Ortlund, Jr., Isaiah, p. 71

How true that is. The only one who can stop the work of God in your life, the only one who can stifle God's Word in your life is **YOU!**

2. So we see that Isaiah is going to go before the people representing God, but they are not going to see their sin, they are not going to understand their error, and because of that refusal to repent, they would not be healed, judgment was coming.

3. This is the work that God has called Isaiah to do and his response was, "Are you kidding me? Do you have anything else for me?" We may say that from time to time but that is not what he said. Let's read on and see what Isaiah says and what the Lord will say.

VERSES 11-13

1. Isaiah wanted to know how long he was going to preach this message and God told him until they are taken into captivity. He was willing to go even though it was going to be a difficult task! God was going to bring judgment upon them, like a giant lumber jack, and He was going to cut down this once fruit producing tree.

And that is exactly what took place. In 606 B. C. the Babylonians came in and brought some of the people into captivity. This was the first of 3 sieges upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians with the last one being in 586 B. C. when the remaining people were taken into captivity, the city, the walls, and the Temple were destroyed.

Then, some 70 years later, under the King of Persia, Cyrus, a decree was made in which all Jews who wanted to return home, could. And so, under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel, only some 50,000 returned out of some 2 to 3 million that were in captivity.

2. We need to understand that God did not completely destroy the Jews but in His grace He spared a remnant or as we are told by Isaiah, God would leave a stump and He would bring life back to it. God would spare a remnant and bring them back into the land. The rest that remained in Babylon did so because they had become comfortable in the world. And it was good that they stayed there because that meant only those that were really committed to go and rebuild Jerusalem and restore their relationship with God would return. The rest that remained had become worldly, carnal and would only infect the rest of the people with their idolatry.

Yes, there were some dark days coming upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah but in that darkness is a glimmer of light as God promises to bring a remnant of His people back into the land. And God is not done with Israel, with the Jews, He is once again going to bring life to them and all Israel shall be saved as Paul said in Romans chapter 11!

3. Let me close with this. When Isaiah saw the LORD who did he see? I believe he saw the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus! How do I know that? Listen to what John says in John 12:41 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit after he quotes Isaiah 6:9 in John 12:40, “**These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.**” Isaiah saw the glory of God, He saw the Pre-incarnate Jesus and it stirred his heart to serve the Lord! May we do the same as we see Jesus and all that He has done for us and be able to say as Isaiah said, “**Here am I! Send me.**”