

What is the Gospel? The Good News in the Prophets (Isaiah 6)

The Apostle Peter, in his first letter to the Church, wrote a great summary statement about the relationship between the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament good news of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:10 – 12 says, *“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”*

Similar to David’s prophetic words in Psalm 22 (which we looked at in our last study), the prophets were chosen by God to speak directly into the circumstances of the people of their time. But, according to Peter, the Holy Spirit within them made the prophets aware that their words were also foretelling the coming of the Messiah (or Christ). The vision of Isaiah (chapter 6) is a good example of this.

1. Read Isaiah 6:1. Why is it significant that Isaiah was given a vision of God, the eternal king of heaven and earth, in the same year of the death of Uzziah¹, Jerusalem’s king of 52 years?
2. Read the first part of the vision given to Isaiah (6:1 – 5). Explain Isaiah’s response to this vision. What do you think your response might have been?
3. Read Isaiah 6:5 – 7. Can you explain Isaiah’s statement about having ‘unclean lips’? What did the flaming coal from the altar of sacrifice do?
4. Read Isaiah 6:8. Why was Isaiah suddenly prepared to be God’s messenger?
5. Explain the meaning of God’s strange message in Isaiah 6:9 – 10.
6. Why was God so determined to proclaim judgement and destruction on his own people? Read Isaiah 6:11 – 13a and also Isaiah 1:1 – 20.
7. What did God mean that ‘the holy seed will be the stump in the land’? (See Isaiah 6:13; 11:1 – 10; 53:1 – 6).
8. Read John 12:37 – 50. How did Jesus fulfil Isaiah’s prophetic vision?
9. In what sense are Christians now God’s prophets?

¹ See 2 Chronicles 26 for further details about King Uzziah (also called Azariah).