

ISAIAH 6:-7:17 IN CONTEXT

An Assignment

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Introduction

This paper seeks to discuss Isaiah 6-7 in its proper context. Context, is an important word. For at once it brings us immediately to the real issue at hand - the text. Exegesis can be done at many levels.¹ Yet, when approaching the Word of God, one is left only with the text and it is here that exegesis must start and remain.²

Isaiah 1-5 is concerned to illustrate Isaiah's prophetic context; the societal condition at the time of his prophetic message, and the general message of woe to the unrepentant and proud nation.³ Four Kings are mentioned right off the bat, putting Isaiah's ministry immediately in the context of a declining nation in the looming shadow of Assyrian captivity. The four kings from 1:1 are only spoken of in the first 39 chapters of the book and look to provide the structure for these first 39 chapters. Following chapter 39, no more reference is made to the kings of Judah and the focus is more eschatological in nature.⁴

Isaiah 6:1-13

Chapter 6, begins right away with the first of these four kings, king Uzziah. Isaiah begins chapter 6 in the context of Uzziah's death (6:1). Uzziah whose heart was lifted up (2 chronicles

¹ Wong Yee-Cheung. A Text Centered Approach to Old Testament Exegesis and Theology and Its Application to the Book of Isaiah, pg 47.

²The question remains, for those holding the inspired and complete Word of God, as to the goal of exegesis. This is answered first of all based on how we view the text itself. Is it primarily a window that one looks through to see what is happening, or is it instead more of a painting that one looks at understanding that it is complete and communicating something about what is happening? According to Dr Jeremy Lyons (class notes 2014), the proper answer must be the painting. All We have is the text. It is the text that must drive our exegesis, not subsequent history or geographical nuances or even a restructuring of the "real," chronology of events. What God has given us through the providential guidance of His Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21) is the very Word of God. Revelation is not a process. What God gave us was a text and it is the text that we must study.

³ J. Alec Motyer. The Prophecy of Isaiah, pg 74.

⁴The only king referenced is Cyrus. The gentile king who sent the Jews back from captivity. This is likely due to the future eschatological focus of the last 27 chapters.

26:15) coincides with the high and haughty pride of man seen in Isaiah 2-5. Man had been commanded to lay low in the dust (2:10) and here Uzziah is seen in that very position, but not through his own humility but through his death. Isaiah saw the Lord, as Priest and King wearing priestly robes. This image immediately brings up the contrast with dead Uzziah who had attempted to take this role for himself in his pride in 2 Chronicles 26. There can be no mistake, this contrast is deliberate. Chapter 7 ties unfaithful Ahaz (7:1) with proud Uzziah. All of this is set to contrast the ultimate priestly King pictured in 6:1.

Isaiah 6:1-7 is seen as the commissioning of Isaiah, a man with unclean lips in the midst of a people of unclean lips (6:5), by the thrice Holy Lord, who sits upon the throne, high and lifted up (6:1). Much could be said in regards to the constant imagery being referenced here in contrast to chapters 1-5, but one of the more powerful contrasts is seen in the phrase, “high and lifted up” (6:1). This contrasts greatly with the pride of Israel vividly depicted in Isaiah 1-5. For all of her pride, Israel was left shaking in fear because of Rezin and Syria in 7:4 but in 6:4 we see the foundations of the thresholds shaking at the presence of the Lord.

Truly Isaiah is drawing everything in contrast to the holiness and greatness of the Lord. Isaiah illustrates this himself recognizing that the people he has been speaking of in chapters 1-5 who are clearly seen as unclean, as really his people. He cries out in 6:5, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” His realization of his own humble position is revealed to him as he sees the Lord. It is important to note that it is in seeing the Lord and His greatness that he is humbled on his face. This is the same reaction we see from John in the Revelation. John writes:

...one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. (Rev. 1:14b-17a)

This similarity is profound in light of Isaiah's ultimate announcement of the coming King. This is the same Jesus who is seen in 52:13 high and lifted up yet in a manner in the very opposite fashion seen here. Literally this reference to being high and lifted up is used right before describing the Christ's humiliation. Jesus uses the idea of being high and lifted up in John 3:13-15 when speaking to Nicodemus about His mission. In this reference however it is more specifically to Moses raising up the serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21:5-9). *The New Bible Commentary*, makes a point here of Isaiah's use of Seraphs and their similarity to the fiery serpents of Numbers 21. He writes: "*Seraphs* means 'fiery ones', an epithet suited to the serpents of Nu. 21:6, 8 and Is. 14:29; 30:6.⁵ One is immediately struck by the shocking comparison. Jesus is comparing Himself to this abhorrent image and what could be worse than an image of a serpent that had been biting and killing those whom you loved? Jesus gives us the answer, echoing the imagery of Isaiah 52:13-53:12, that the apostle Paul uses in Philippians 2:6-11. God on a cross is the most abhorrent image imaginable.

This is where Isaiah is driving throughout, the Lord high and lifted up becomes humble and is exalted because of His humility. This contrast to the fickle unfaithful and proud nation is jarring. Isaiah's use of these contrasts serve to leave a constant reminder of, not only the majesty and worthiness of the King but of the sovereignty of God in saving this wicked and undeserving

⁵*New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 637.

people. Truly, sovereign grace is an important running undercurrent. John Martin brings this very emphasis out in his portion of, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* with this observation:

To Isaiah, the throne emphasized that the Lord is indeed the true King of Israel. God's being "high and exalted" symbolized His position before the nation. The people were wanting God to work on their behalf (Isa. 5:19) but He *was* doing so, as evidenced by His lofty position among them. The Lord's long robe speaks of His royalty and majesty. His being in the temple suggests that though He hates mere religiosity (1:11–15) He still wanted the nation to be involved in the temple worship. The temple and the temple sacrifices pictured the righteous dealings of the sovereign God with His covenant people.⁶

His point is that God is on the throne even in the midst of the chaos and the haughtiness. Isaiah is commissioned by this sovereign God who sends him to a people who will not listen. This is significant for God is sending Isaiah not so much to encourage repentance but to harden hearts through preaching repentance.

The radical nature of this sovereignty is illustrated well by Gary V. Smith in his discussion on the theology of Isaiah. He writes:

A second and more difficult question arises over the Lord's command for Isaiah to harden the hearts of his audience. Most prophetic calls involve encouraging people to repent and not harden their hearts against God. Clements and many others maintain that God never originally told Isaiah to harden the people's heart. Instead these words are a later retrospective theological reflection on what happened when Ahaz rejected Isaiah's message. Looking back on what happened, Isaiah realized that the divine act of hardening explained why his prophetic words failed to persuade Ahaz and why Judah suffered so severely during the Syro-Ephraimite War. Others take a more psychological view and think these words represent the prophet's bitter disappointment after the leaders and people of Judah rejected his exhortations to trust God (7:9). But both of these approaches severely undermine the credibility of Isaiah as an honest reporter of what happened when he saw Almighty God as King on his throne. How could a true prophet dare to put his own later reinterpretation of these historical events in the form of a divine call, suggesting that God came to him in all his glory, forgave his sins, and then told him to do

⁶John A. Martin, "Isaiah" In , in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Is 6:1.

something like this, when it really never happened that way at all and God never really spoke the words in 6:9–10?⁷

For Smith, the sovereignty of God seems a difficult concept. What did God mean when he tells

Isaiah:

And he said, “Go, and say to this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” (Isa. 6:9-10)

Jesus quotes this very section when describing why He is hiding the truth from the Pharisees in parables in Matthew 13:13-16. Weirsbe makes an astute observation as to what is happening here and its relationship to other Scripture, saying: “The sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay. Note the steps downward in John 12: they *would* not believe (v. 37); therefore, they *could* not believe (v. 39); and thus they *should* not believe (v. 40) because they had sealed their own doom.”⁸ Elsewhere in Scripture, we see Matthew draw the reader’s attention to Isaiah 42:1, speaking of Jesus’ withdrawal from the religious leaders (Matt. 12:14-21). This follows the equally jarring section in Matthew where Jesus, after denouncing the cities where most of His miracles had been done due to the unrepentant hearts of the people, says:

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matthew 11:25-27)

⁷Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 184-85.

⁸Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Is 6:8–13.

We then see in the very next verses that the people who He chooses to reveal Himself are to the humble and repentant, bringing us full circle back to Isaiah and His emphasis on man being seen as low and God as high.

Everything thus far in Isaiah 6 has been preparation for 6:8-13. Now God can call Isaiah and use him to bring the judgment of God on the nation through their hard hearted denial of Him. The end game is not destruction however, it is grace. This is pictured first in Isaiah's own cry "Here I am! Send me!" (Is. 6:8).

Two things are remarkable about this cry. First, we see the striking contrast to his earlier despair upon seeing Christ. What could have made the difference? We see that it is the burning coal brought from the altar to touch his lips and atone for his wickedness (Is. 6:6-8). This contrast epitomizes the entire affair of Israel and the call to repentance. It is this posture that is seen as blessed, a point emphatically brought out by Christ Himself in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-11). Specifically the words, "blessed are the poor in Spirit," are a perfect description of Isaiah in chapter 6. He being poor in Spirit, not only sees God, but is commissioned to be His mouthpiece. He is exalted in his humility, precisely what Christ spoke of and exemplified (Matt. 23:12; Phil. 2:1-11). Second, in keeping with this idea of exalted humility, is the fact that Isaiah's human voice is heard in God's Heavenly court. In contrast to 1 Kings 22:19-23, and the description of the lying prophets we see wicked and repentant Isaiah heard in his repentant faith.

Isaiah's own change of tone keeps the reader right through the sovereign destruction promised to Israel to the stump promised that will deliver her in 6:13. In the same way Isaiah is pictured repentant and then atoned for, we see Israel's Savior growing out of the stump of the

house of David. This remarkable picture of Grace is pictured all throughout Scripture. One such place is 2 Samuel 12. David, having sinned against God in his murderous adultery with Bathsheba is seen mourning on his face before God to save his sick child. God's judgment took the child away from David and Bathsheba and in verse 24 we read: "Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the LORD loved him" (2 Sam. 12:24). God brought, Solomon, a king in the line of Christ, a king who illustrated the future reign and glory of Christ like no other, through the horrible judgment wrought by God on their illicit relationship. In the same way, God brings out of the burnt stump spoken of in Isaiah 6, an image of the coming King. This King is described only a few chapters latter in this way:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
 and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 and his name shall be called
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 Of the increase of his government and of peace
 there will be no end,
 on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
 with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore. (Is. 9:6-7)

Isaiah 7:1-17

Isaiah 7 begins with king Ahaz and the house of Judah shaking in fear of the coming invasion by a superior force. God brings comfort to Ahaz but he seems to want none of it. The nation is seen to value the strength of what they could see, not of the God who had been faithful to them from the start. They are shaking in their heart with fear of the union opposing them

made up of Rezin, king of Syria and Pekah the son of Ramaliah king of Israel. The emphasis on their shaking hearts follows closely after seeing the shaking threshold in 6:4. They should have been shaking at the glory and dread of their God but they were shaking in dread of mere men.

Despite this imagery, chapters 7-12, focus on the deliverance God would bring the nation.⁹ According to Martin:

Judah's deliverance from the Aram-Israel alliance (7:1–4) pictures her ultimate deliverance. And the fall of the Assyrian Empire (10:5–19), resulting in "deliverance" for Judah, pictures the fall of all nations who oppose God and His people. Isaiah did not say that these deliverances would bring about the glorious kingdom. But he did indicate that the glorious kingdom, the Millennium, eventually will come (chap. 11). It will be greater than any previous kingdom. In that kingdom "the holy seed" (6:13), the believing remnant (10:20–21), will sing a song of thanksgiving (chap. 12).

Deliverance aside, the fear about the line of the house of David is real. The line is threatened specifically in 7:6 with the threat to replace Ahaz with a puppet king from a different line. Thus, Isaiah brings us to the dual threat faced in this circumstance. This context becomes more important in understanding how the gospel writers saw this promise to be speaking about a north some 700 years after these events. The entire affair comes to a head in verse 10 where Ahaz is told to ask for a sign of the Lord to assure him that God would deliver him. Verse 12 sees the false piety of Ahaz on display as he refuses to 'put the Lord to the test.'¹⁰ Keil and Deitzsch astutely observe:

What a pious sound this has! And yet his self-hardening reached its culminating point in these well-sounding words. He hid himself hypocritically under the mask of Deut. 6:16,

⁹ John A. Martin, "Isaiah" In , in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Is 7–12.,

¹⁰This could seem at first glance to render Ahaz a positive figure in this passage but the next verse suggest otherwise. Ahaz would be referring to Deuteronomy 6:16, in this response. If it were not for Judges 6:36-40, where Gideon a judge of Israel asks for a sign and is graciously blessed with one. God gave signs of His promises regularly. He gave a sign to Noah after the flood, He gave Abraham the sign of His presence walking through the the split animals, H gave signs to Moses and on an on. Further, God Himself was telling Ahaz to ask for a sign - a fact which settles the issue.

to avoid being disturbed in his Assyrian policy, and was infatuated enough to designate the acceptance of what Jehovah Himself had offered as tempting God. He studiously brought down upon himself the fate denounced in Isa. 6, and indeed not upon himself only, but upon all Judah as well. For after a few years the forces of Asshur would stand upon the same fuller's field (Isa. 36:2) and demand the surrender of Jerusalem. In that very hour, in which Isaiah was standing before Ahaz, the fate of Jerusalem was decided for more than two thousand years.¹¹

Isaiah turns his attention from Ahaz to the house of David and gives a sign to it. This is how the gospel writers could understand Isaiah's words to be referring to more than the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz, in 8:1. Motyer captures this well:

To wave the offer aside was to reject God flatly, but Ahaz had already made up his mind. Faith played no part in his religion (2 Ki. 16:3–4, 10–20) or his politics. Behind the smooth scriptural talk (12; *cf.* Dt. 6:16) lay a plan to outwit his enemies by making friends with the biggest of them (*cf.* 2 Ki. 16:7–10). What kind of friend Assyria would prove, Isaiah made clear in v 17, reinforced by vs 18–25. Meanwhile God had his own sign, for a wider audience than Ahaz (the *you* in vs 13–14 is plural, for David's whole dynasty) and of richer meaning than a show of power. The attendant details partly reassure (15, 16), partly warn (17); the *curds and honey* are enigmatic, they are symbols of natural plenty (*cf.* 22; Ex. 3:8) yet also of a land depopulated (22b) and untilled (*cf.* 23–25). But the heart of the sign is Immanuel. Who he is remains unsaid; it will emerge in 9:6–7; 11:1–5. Enough, so far, that while the king calls in an army, God looks to the birth of a child (*cf.* Gn. 17:19).¹²

The question then remains as to how this sign fits the crisis being faced by Ahaz. A straight prophecy about Christ does not seem to fit the context of chapter seven as a whole until the

¹¹Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), Is 7:10–11.

¹²*New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 639.

rejection of Ahaz is taken in view. The promise of the Christ is then a promise and a sign for the house of David that had been threatened by the puppet king taking his line.¹³

Much controversy has been generated by the translated ‘virgin,’ here.¹⁴ Regarding this Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, bring clarity:

Alma -from a root, “to lie hid,” virgins being closely kept from men’s gaze in their parents’ custody in the East. The *Hebrew*, and the *Septuagint* here, and *Greek* (Mt 1:23), have the article, *the* virgin, some definite one known to the speaker and his hearers; primarily, the woman, then a virgin, about immediately to become the second wife, and bear a child, whose attainment of the age of discrimination (about three years) should be preceded by the deliverance of Judah from its two invaders; its fullest significance is realized in “*the* woman” (Ge 3:15), whose seed should bruise the serpent’s head and deliver captive man (Je 31:22; Mic 5:3). Language is selected such as, while *partially* applicable to the immediate event, receives its *fullest*, most appropriate, and exhaustive accomplishment in Messianic events. The New Testament application of such prophecies is not a strained “accommodation”; rather the temporary fulfilment of an adaptation of the far-reaching prophecy to the present passing event, which foreshadows typically the great central end of prophecy, Jesus Christ (Rev 19:10). Evidently the wording is such as to apply more fully to Jesus Christ than to the prophet’s son; “virgin” applies, in its

¹³Regarding the conclusion that Isaiah was speaking of his own child Keil and Delitzsch had this to say:

Moreover, the condition of pregnancy, which is here designated by the participial adjective הַרְהָ (cf., 2 Sam. 11:5), was not an already existing one in this instance, but (as in all probability also in Judg. 13:5, cf., 4) something future, as well as the act of bearing, since *hinneh* is always used by Isaiah to introduce a future occurrence. This use of *hinneh* in Isaiah is a sufficient answer to Gesenius, Knobel, and others, who understand *hā’almāh* as referring to the young wife of the prophet himself, who was at that very time with child. But it is altogether improbable that the wife of the prophet himself should be intended. For if it were to her that he referred, he could hardly have expressed himself in a more ambiguous and unintelligible manner; and we cannot see why he should not much rather have said אִשְׁתִּי or הַנְּבִיאָה, to say nothing of the fact that there is no further allusion made to any son of the prophet of that name, and that a sign of this kind founded upon the prophet’s own family affairs would have been one of a very precarious nature. (Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), Is 7:10–11.)

¹⁴Ted Cabal, Chad Owen Brand, and Ray Clendenen, in their *Apologetics Study Bible*, had this to say: The Hebrew word ‘*almah*’ refers to a young woman before the age of marriage, and is sometimes translated “virgin.” Some interpreters claim that Matthew misappropriated this verse (Mt 1:23) in applying it to the birth of Jesus. They believe Isaiah was referring to a woman in the time of Ahaz—either a son born to an ‘*almah*’ in Ahaz’s harem or a son to Isaiah’s wife (8:1–4), and that this “Immanuel” was a sign of hope for the future when “God will be with us.” Others accept this immediate application, but also view the passage as prophetic of Christ (a “double fulfillment” approach). But Ahaz’s good son Hezekiah was already born at this time; and Isaiah already had children, so his wife would not be called a “virgin” at this point in her life. Thus, many believe this prophecy only referred to the future birth of the Messiah. If so, this messianic application was expanded and verified through progressive revelation in 9:6–7, which announced that “a child will be born for us . . . He will reign on the throne of David. (Ted Cabal, Chad Owen Brand, E. Ray Clendenen et al., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1002-04.)

simplest sense, to the Virgin Mary, rather than to the prophetess who ceased to be a *virgin* when she “conceived”; “Immanuel,” *God with us* (Jn 1:14; Rev 21:3), cannot in a strict sense apply to Isaiah’s son, but only to Him who is presently called expressly (Is 9:6), “the Child, the Son, Wonderful (compare Is 8:18), the mighty *God*.” Local and temporary features (as in Is 7:15, 16) are added in every type; otherwise it would be no type, but the thing itself. There are resemblances to the great Antitype sufficient to be recognized by those who seek them; dissimilarities enough to confound those who do not desire to discover them.¹⁵

Verses 16 seems to move back into the present speaking about, not a child but the amount of time until the two kings he dreads will be deserted. Isaiah is taking Ahaz’s rejection and using it to give a sign to the house of Israel and uses the timeline of a child’s birth and early education to speak of how long his immediate deliverance will come. Martin writes about 7:16 this way:

Within about three years (nine months for the pregnancy and two or three years until the boy would know the difference between good and evil) the alliance would be broken. It was broken in 732 b.c. when Tiglath-Pileser III destroyed Damascus¹⁶

Ahaz is seen in 2 Kings 16:7-10, going to Damascus to meet the Assyrian monarch after this defeat. Isaiah gives this great hope to the house of David but in a way that those who do not have a hardened heart can understand. This idea is brought out by Christ in His reference to Isaiah in light of the hard hearted Pharisees of His day:

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes

¹⁵Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Is 7:14.

¹⁶John A. Martin, "Isaiah" In , in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Is 7:14–16.

and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matt. 13:10-17)

This reference by Jesus, back to Isaiah 6:9-10, puts this view of Isaiah's prophecy regarding the Virgin in the proper light.

Conclusion

Isaiah 6-7 in its proper context picture God's sovereign grace in the context of man's wicked rebellion. It serves as a hinge pin in the redemptive plan of God. The glory of God is seen and the repentance of man is illustrated in the prophet Isaiah's cry 'woe is me.' God's grace in saving and atoning is seen in the promised Seed at the end of chapter 6 and Immanuel in chapter 7. These themes are shocking in their contrast. The connection between God, high and lifted up, in His temple in Isaiah 6 and the Servant, high and lifted up, in Isaiah 53 is as shocking as any contrast could be. At once man is seen in his petty hubris and arrogance. It is this vision of God high and lifted up that gives a full view of the cross. We see a full view of both grace and wrath, justice and forgiveness. The key aspect of these images is that Isaiah shows them fully expressed, with neither mitigating the impact of the other. This idea is seen most fully at the cross. This is how the Apostle Paul puts it:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26)

Paul captures the idea that Isaiah was illustrating for us. It is only at the cross that God can be both a perfect and just judge, fully carrying out His wrath and at the same time a perfect image of love and mercy fully carrying out the redemption and justification of His elect. In this one moment, high and lifted up, we see God fully displayed. We are left, with the prophet Isaiah, with no recourse but to declare, 'woe is me,' knowing full well that we can then say like the prophet Isaiah, 'here I am, send me!'

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