

We continue our examination of judgmental prophecy; Isaiah 6. This prophecy is featured in the Gospels and Acts period and we need to know its impact if we are to correctly understand those times and purposes of God.

In our previous lesson we looked at Isaiah 6 and saw that King Uzziah had turned from the commands of the Lord by entering the Temple to work the services of a priest. Because he refused to heed the warnings given him, God punished him with leprosy until he died. Uzziah was given years of opportunity to repent and the year he died Isaiah saw the Lord in all His glory. Despite Uzziah's lack of repentance the Lord will be glorified in Israel.

The divided people of Israel at that time were also wayward and unrepentant even though many messengers were sent to them and in Isaiah 6 the Lord announces this judgment against His people;

[Isa 6:9](#) And He said, Go, and tell this people, You hear indeed, but do not understand; and seeing you see, but do not know.

[Isa 6:10](#) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back, and be healed.

Despite the national rejection of the Lord's Words there was always been a remnant in Israel; a few faithful followers. We can read about them in Isaiah 6:13. Also consider Isaiah 1:9 & 10:20-23.

In the Gospels the Lord comes to His people, Israel. God sent messengers in the past now He sends His Son to them. Will they listen? The rulers of Israel reject the Lord and in Matt.13:13-15, Isaiah 6 is announced against them.

In John chapter 12 we have the fickle crowds seeking the Lord because of the signs He had done (Jn.12:9, 12-13, 17-18, & 29). Maybe the crowd loved the entertainment for the Lord goes on to say:

[Joh 12:37](#) But even though He had done so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him,

[Joh 12:39](#) Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

[Joh 12:40](#) "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them."

We must be very careful here. With the announcement of Isaiah 6 against the leaders and the nation of Israel are we to accept the traditional view that Israel were cast aside at the cross or Pentecost? Was this the end of Israel and are we free to imagine that now the "church" came into being? The answer to both these questions is a resounding no.

In the past, the judgment of Isaiah 6 did not fall immediately. Further opportunity was provided for Israel and this is exactly the case in the NT. Israel was not cast aside at the cross or Pentecost as can be proven by the fact that the Lord asked forgiveness for Israel as He died and Paul tells us plainly, late in the Acts period, that Israel was not cast aside;

[Luk 23:33](#) And when they came to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him ...

[Luk 23:34](#) And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. .. (Cp. Acts 2:23, 3:17, & 13:27. Note Acts 7:60)

The Lord prayed for forgiveness of a sin of ignorance and His prayer was heard, Israel was forgiven. Paul's plain statement in Romans declares Israel had not been put away. The Acts period is an extended opportunity for Israel to repent and turn to Him.

[Rom 10:21](#) But to Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobeying and gainsaying people."

[Rom 11:1](#) I say then, Did not God put away His people? Let it not be said! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

[Rom 11:2](#) God did not thrust out His people whom He foreknew. (See Roms.11:11. Israel had not fallen, were only stumbling)

In Acts 2-4:14, Peter preaches in Jerusalem to the Israelites and the rulers of the nation. Yes, some of the common people turned to the Lord but the majority and the leaders were unrepentant. The leaders oppose with threats;

[Act 4:16](#) What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by themwe cannot deny it.

[Act 4:17](#) But, so that it spread no further among the people, let us strictly threaten them, that they speak to no man in this name ...

The many wonderful miracles powers and signs which accompanied the message to Israel could not be denied but the majority and leaders continued to oppose. The rejection was manifested in deepening hatred (see Acts 5:28-31, 6:8-15, 7:59, 8:1, 3, & 9:1-2). This is all about Israel, God's people, not "the church". The culmination of rejection is seen in Acts 12:1-4. The King of Israel kills one of the Lord's disciples. What would the Lord do now?

God responded and His judgment fell. Herod was struck dead (Acts 12:20-23) and partial blindness fell on Israel. We see this in the first recorded miracle at the hands of Paul. However, this does not mean Israel was finished or put aside.

In Acts 13 Bar-jesus a Jew, is withstanding the Lord, just like the nation, and he is struck with partial blindness and needs someone to lead him by the hand. At the same time this Jew is blinded, a Gentile believes;

[Act 13:11](#) And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is on you (Bar-jesus). And you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a while. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

[Act 13:12](#) Then, seeing the thing happening, the proconsul believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

We must not conclude that “the church” started just because a Gentile believes and more Gentiles are included from this point onwards in Acts.

Neither should we assume that just because a Jew is struck with temporary blindness that they are lost. There was another Jew before Acts 13 who was doing exactly the same as Bar-jesus, opposing and withstanding the Word of the Lord. This Jew was struck with temporary blindness and it was in the process of his salvation. Paul was struck with blindness and was SAVED, not cut off. I wonder if this could be the same for the nation of Israel.

Paul knew all about being temporarily blind to be saved. So it is no surprise to us that Paul should be given the reason for this partial blindness on the Jewish nation which is what the miracle against Bar-jesus represented.

Partial blindness was not a death blow for Israel but an act of mercy. We must turn to Paul to understand the setting from this point onwards in Acts. Acts 13 is not the beginning of “the church” but an act of mercy to unrepentant Israel. Acts is about Israel.

Paul explains this new set of conditions in the letter to the Romans. He tells us what had happened to Israel and we should carefully consider all of the following sections, Roms.2:28-3:4, 9:1-11:36.

Yes it is a fact, Israel were not repenting, they were rejecting the message during Acts but this does not mean God is introducing anything new, like The Mystery of Ephesians including the church. Would that every Christian fully understood the truth of this dispensational question and answer of Paul;

[Rom 3:3-4a](#) For what if some (of ISRAEL) were unfaithful [or, refused to believe]? Their (ISRAEL's) unfaithfulness [or, unbelief] will not make the faithfulness of God useless, will it? Absolutely not! (ALT)

Paul says plainly, just because Israel are not turning to the Lord does not mean that God's purpose for them has been thwarted, cancelled, altered or postponed. Uzziah was struck and remained unrepentant but the Lord was seen in Glory. If Paul says God's purposes are on schedule even though Israel are opposing it would be abusing Scripture to suggest God was introducing “the church”. Look at Paul's explanation of this blindness on Israel and the glorious expectation at the end of the great explanation in chapters 9-11;

[Rom 11:25](#) For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in.

[Rom 11:26](#) And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

During Acts, despite Israel's hardness of heart, God's faithfulness would be seen. All Israel would be saved; this was Paul's joy for he writes;

[Rom 11:26](#) And so all Israel shall be saved;

[Rom 11:28](#) Indeed as regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes. But as regards the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

[Rom 11:29](#) For the free gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Paul alone was given this mystery of Israel's partial blindness. Remember in the gospels? When Isaiah 6 is announced mysteries of the Kingdom were revealed to the few, Matt.13:13-16, 11. Acts 13 is exactly the same setting, Israel suffered a judgment and a mystery was revealed to explain what was happening.

Israel was not cut off at Acts 13 or at the writing of Romans. The mystery of Israel's partial blindness explains what God was doing at that point in Acts. Before Paul was given this mystery he wished himself accursed from Christ for his brothers; the Israelites. However, now that he knew why Israel was struck partially blind he wrote this;

[Rom 9:3](#) For I myself was wishing to be accursed from Christ for my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

[Rom 9:4](#) who are Israelites; (MKJV)

Now that Paul understands what has happened to Israel and that God's plans had not changed for them, he is more at peace.

We shall examine this mystery and the setting of the Acts from Acts 13 onwards next lesson.

For previous lessons go to this link

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