

**Notes for Children's Talk & Sermon Outline for
Sunday, 7 March 2021**

Children's Talk: How the Lord Prepared Isaiah to Be His Prophet

- For the next few weeks we're going to be talking about prophets.
 - Do you know what a prophet is?
 - Someone who communicates a message from the Lord to the people.
 - Sometimes the message is about something that's going to happen in the future.
- Imagine if the Lord was here and he said, I need someone to volunteer to be my prophet.
 - Would you put up your hand?
 - How do you feel when someone asks for volunteers?
 - Some people like to go up.
 - Other people don't.
 - I tend to want to know what's going to be asked of me before I put my hand up.
 - I'm not sure if I would put up my hand to be a prophet because I wouldn't be sure if I could do it.
 - How could a person feel ready to do the job of being a prophet?
- Let's listen to what the prophet Isaiah did when He had a vision of the Lord.
- Isaiah 6:1-8 (NKJV)
 - ¹ 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. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:
 - “Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!”
 - ⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.
 - ⁵ So I said:
 - “Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
Jehovah of hosts.”
 - ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth with it, and said:
 - “Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged.”
 - ⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
 - “Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?”
 - Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”
- And then the Lord gives Isaiah a message to tell the people.

- At first Isaiah feels very unworthy.
 - He's worried that he's seen God because he says that he has unclean lips.
 - Then one of the seraphim flies to him and touches his mouth and lips with a live coal that he took from the altar and he says that Isaiah has been purified.
 - Then when the Lord wants to send someone, Isaiah is ready to volunteer.

- Often the prophets had to tell people things that they didn't want to hear.
 - The message that the Lord gave to Isaiah in this story was not one that they would have wanted to hear.
 - But Isaiah could still bring the message, he could still do the job of a prophet of the Lord, because the Lord had prepared him.

- Sometimes you might have to say something to someone that they don't want to hear.
 - Before you speak ask the Lord to get you ready.
 - The coal from the altar is a symbol of the Lord's love.
 - Ask the Lord to touch your mouth with His love.
 - To purify away anything that might want to be mean to other people or hurt them.
 - So that you can say what you need to say.

- Sometimes we might want to speak quickly without thinking.
- Other times we might want to not say anything when we really do need to say something.
- In both of those situations, ask the Lord for help.
 - Ask Him to touch your mouth with his love so that, like the prophet Isaiah, you can say what you need to say from love, whether people want to hear it or not.

- *Amen.*

Finding Jesus in the Lives of the Prophets, Part 1: Isaiah

A Sermon by Pastor Malcolm G. Smith
7 March 2021

Intro

- When Jesus was thirty years old He was baptised by John in the Jordan river and then He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness for forty days (Luke 3:21-23).
- After that we read this in the Gospel of Luke:
 - Luke 4:14-22 (NKJV)
 - ¹⁴ Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵ And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.
 - ¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:
 - ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
 - ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”
 - ²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² So all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”
- Such a cool story!
 - That moment when he sits down and everyone’s eyes are fixed on Him.
 - And then that simple but profound statement that that old prophecy was being fulfilled at that very moment.
- But, to really understand what’s going on in this moment, we need to rewind and understand what led to this moment and what the relationship is between Jesus and Isaiah.
- We’re starting a series today called “Finding Jesus in the Lives of the Prophets” and today we’re focussing on the prophet Isaiah.
 - We’ve done a couple of these series before—“Finding Jesus in the Life of Abraham”, “...in the Life of Joshua”, and “...in the Life of Elisha”.
 - In each case we’ve been looking at how we can gain a deeper understanding of what Jesus Christ experienced on Earth through these Old Testament stories.
- Today, we’re going to focus on Isaiah and we’ll look at Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the coming weeks.
 - We’ll start by talking a little bit about Isaiah the book and Isaiah the person and then we’ll get into finding Jesus in the life of Isaiah.

A Bit About Isaiah the Book and Isaiah the Person

- The book of Isaiah is the first book of the section of the Old Testament and the Bible known as “the Prophets”.
 - One commentary I read said this:
 - Isaiah’s position as the first of the prophetic books in the Tanak (the Jewish Bible) and in the Christian Bible indicates something of the esteem accorded it. The frequency with which it is mentioned in ancient literature and with which it appears among the Dead Sea Scrolls is further witness to its popularity and influence.
.... The New Testament quotes from fifty-seven different passages in Isaiah. (John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, vol. 24 of [Word Biblical Commentary](#). 2d; Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), xlix.)
- It’s also a long book; it’s the sixth longest book in the Bible (<https://overviewbible.com/longest-book-of-the-bible/>) and it has 66 chapters.
- It contains some of the most familiar and beautiful prophecies.
 - For example this is from Isaiah chapter 40:
 - Isaiah 40:28-31 (NKJV, modified)
 - 28 Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, Jehovah,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
 - 29 He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.
 - 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
 - 31 But those who wait on Jehovah
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.
- And, like the other books of the prophets, it also contains a lot of material that is dense with symbolic imagery and is sometimes quite hard to understand.
 - Reading it can feel like looking at the sky on a cloudy day—it can be pretty grey and dark for quite a while but every so often there’s a gap in the clouds and this beautiful light shines through and tinges the clouds with gold.
 - And then the clouds cover the sun again.
- The book begins with these words in chapter 1, verse 1:
 - The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
- There are a couple of stories about Isaiah, the son of Amoz, in the book of Isaiah and also in the books of 2nd Kings and 2nd Chronicles.
 - These are stories about a prophet who interacted with and advised kings, especially king Hezekiah.
- For a long time, Isaiah the son of Amoz was assumed to be the author of the whole book.

- And that is still the most likely circumstance, from a New Church perspective.
- In the last couple of hundred years people have started speculating that certain parts of the book were added in later by other people.
 - And so people often divide Isaiah into two or three sections and they think that the later sections were written two centuries later than the first part of the book.
 - But that's because those later sections make reference to events that happened about two centuries later.
 - And maybe it was just that the Lord inspired Isaiah the son of Amoz to write down prophecies about things that were going to happen two centuries later.
- I've mostly ignored these theories but, in doing research for this sermon, I listened to an interview with a scholar of Isaiah and he argued that there's nowhere in scripture where it says that it wasn't put together by a group of people over time and, if it was, that doesn't mean that it was any less Divinely inspired ("Christopher Hays - Isaiah and Assyria" *OnScript*. 10 June 2020. <https://onscript.study/podcast/christopher-hays-isaiah-and-assyria/>)
 - Mostly we will shrug and move on but, if it's an interesting idea for you to consider, then you can do so.
- With that brief and inadequate overview of Isaiah the book and Isaiah the person let's move on to finding Jesus in Isaiah.

How Do We Find Jesus in Isaiah?

The Name Isaiah

- One fun thing is that the names Jesus and Isaiah are actually very similar.
- When we did the series "Finding Jesus in the life of Joshua" we pointed out that Jesus and Joshua are the same name, just the Greek version and the Hebrew version.
 - They both have two parts—a "Je-" or "Jo-" part that means Jehovah and a "-sus" or "-shua" part that means salvation.
 - And so the names Jesus and Joshua both mean "Jehovah is salvation".
 - It doesn't sound like it in English but the name Isaiah in Hebrew has those same two parts but just in the reverse order.
 - The Yah at the end of IsaiYAH is the "Je-" or "Jo-" part and the first part is the part with an "s" sound that means salvation.
 - Like the name Jesus, Isaiah means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Salvation of Jehovah".
- So that's a fun connection.

Messianic Prophecies

- A more obvious connection between Isaiah and Jesus—at least to a Christian reader—is all the Messianic prophecies.
 - Here are just a few of the familiar Messianic prophecies that are from the prophet Isaiah:
 - Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV)
 - ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
 - Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)
 - ⁶ For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Isaiah 60:1-3 (NKJV, modified)
 - 1 Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon you.
 - 2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But Jehovah will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.
 - 3 The Gentiles shall come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.

- When we think of the purpose of these prophecies we often think of their function to us.
 - We think of the purpose of them being so that we human beings could have some sense of what the Messiah would be like when He came.
 - And so that, once He came, we would be able to recognise Him.
 - That is very important.

The Role of the Book of Isaiah in Jesus' Life

- But what I want to focus on today is the role that the book of Isaiah played in Jesus' life—what it would have meant to *Him* in His work to save us all from our sins.
- By the time He was sitting in that synagogue on that day He was clear about His purpose and what He was there to do but that was not always the case.
- We might think of Jesus as being omniscient and knowing everything for His whole life on Earth but the teachings of the New Church explain that that's not how it was.
 - *Secrets of Heaven* §1469
 - The Lord possessed all truth previous to His instruction. But this truth was stored up in the Lord's internal self, which was Divine. The facts that He learned are not truths, but are only recipient vessels; just as whatever is in a person's memory is by no means truth, although it is so called; but the truth is in it, as in vessels. These vessels were to be formed, or rather to be opened, by the Lord, through instruction in knowledges from the Word....
- Isn't this an intriguing idea?
 - Jesus had a Divine part of Him and that part of Him knew everything.
 - But Jesus also had a human part of Him that He took on from Mary and that part of Him had to learn in the way that any human being does, by gradually acquiring more knowledge.
 - And as He gained more pieces of knowledge, each piece of knowledge was a container on a lower level for the things that some part of Him already knew at the deepest level.
 - It's sort of like when you've been trying to figure something out for a long time and then someone gives you a term or a concept for it and suddenly you can understand what's going on much more clearly and get a grip on what it is you're dealing with.

- The main way Jesus gained these vessels was by reading and studying the Word.
 - *Secrets of Heaven* §1461
 - [W]hen He was young, the Lord did not want to be indoctrinated with any other kind of knowledge but knowledge of the Word, which, again, gave him open access to his Father, Jehovah himself, with whom He was to unite and become one.

- So Jesus needed to read the Word as He was growing up, to gradually acquire more and more containers for the infinite knowledge He had within the Divine part of Himself and to learn more and more about what He was supposed to do.

- With this in mind, let's imagine what it must have been like for Jesus the first time He read or heard some excerpts from the book of Isaiah.
- Maybe it would have been having it read to Him by Mary or Joseph or maybe it would have been hearing it read at their local synagogue or maybe it would have been reading it for Himself at their local synagogue.
 - Remember that at age twelve He astonished the teachers at the temple in Jerusalem with His understanding and answers (Luke 2:47), presumably His understanding of Hebrew scriptures and His answers to questions arising from those scripture.
- So, probably sometime before twelve, He hears or reads Isaiah.
 - Isaiah 1:1-4 (NKJV, modified)
 - 1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
 - 2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!
For Jehovah has spoken:
"I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled against Me;
 - 3 The ox knows its owner
And the donkey its master's crib;
But Israel does not know,
My people do not consider."
 - 4 Alas, sinful nation,
A people laden with iniquity,
A brood of evildoers,
Children who are corrupters!
They have forsaken Jehovah,
They have provoked to anger
The Holy One of Israel,
They have turned away backward.

- From this He would start to get a sense of the spiritual crisis that the world was in.
 - His understanding would have been way deeper than ours.
 - We hear something like
"The ox knows its owner
And the donkey its master's crib...."
And we understand that it's saying that animals are better at knowing their master than we are at knowing our God.
 - But Jesus would have understood the internal sense of this imagery immediately and holistically.

- We have to parse it through—“an ox means natural good and a donkey means natural truth so... therefore....” (See *Secrets of Heaven* §2781).
- Whereas I get the sense that the Lord would have known the symbolism right away and the meaning of the interaction of all the different symbols that are talked about.
 - And not just for this little section but as He read the whole book, even sections that are quite obscure to us like the burden against Moab, for example.
 - From even these He would have gained a detailed and nuanced understanding of exactly what the spiritual situation was that He was dealing with.
- And He also would have read those Messianic prophecies and learned about the role that He was to play and *how* He was to play that role.
- Think of Him reading that story we read in the Children’s Talk about Isaiah feeling like “a man of unclean lips”.
 - He would have resonated with that because He knew that there was part of Him that was not fully Divine.
 - And then He would have read about the angel touching Isaiah’s mouth and lips with the live coal and He would have known it meant purification from Divine love and He would have known that He too could be made ready to answer the call to do the mission that was before Him.
- We can think of Him reading this from the end of chapter 1 of Isaiah:
 - Isaiah 1:16-18 (NKJV)
 - 16 “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.
Cease to do evil,
 - 17 Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Rebuke the oppressor;
Defend the fatherless,
Plead for the widow.
 - 18 “Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says Jehovah,
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.
- It must have been, at least in part, through reading passages like this from the Old Testament that Jesus would have gained the wisdom to be able to talk with and help the sinners, harlots, and tax collectors that He spent a lot of time with later in His life.
- The teachings of the New Church say that
 - *Secrets of Heaven* §2523:1
 - In the internal sense of the Word the Lord’s entire life is described, as it was going to be when He was in the world, even as to His perceptions and thoughts. For these things had been foreseen and provided, since they were from the Divine.

- We can only imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to read a book like Isaiah and see so much of what was before Him laid out, even as to the perceptions and thoughts that would be in His mind when He was in the world.
 - Imagine, for example, when He read Isaiah 53.
 - Isaiah 53:3-7 (NKJV)
 - 4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
 - 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
- He knew what He would have to go through externally—what they would do to His body—and He also knew what He would have to go through internally—in His heart, mind, and spirit—to be able to do the work that was in front of Him.

Conclusion

- We can now, perhaps, have a bit more sense of what it would have been like for Jesus, at age thirty, to read from the book of Isaiah that day in the synagogue in Nazareth.
- At that point, He probably had been reading and reflecting on the book of Isaiah for decades and might have known it all by heart.
 - It certainly seems likely that He would have known the part that He read that day by heart.
- But still He turned to it in the book and read it to the people.
 - 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
 - He knew this was true of Him—that He had a Divine soul within Him and He was the anointed Messiah.
 - To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
 - From reading Isaiah and other parts of the Bible He knew just how spiritually poor, brokenhearted, and in need of healing people were.
 - To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
 - 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”
 - He knew that it was the right time for Him to be beginning His public ministry, to be really setting this whole process in motion that had been prophesied about so long before.
 - And He had a clear and detailed understanding of just what would be required of Him if He was going to set at liberty all the people who were spiritually oppressed.
 - And still He did it.
 - He knew why it was needed; He knew what it would cost Him; and like Isaiah He said, “Here am I! Send me.”
- Amen.