

Isaiah & Independence Day

Introduction: Independence Day with an Asterisk?

- Although there are surely many who can remember past Independence Days that happened during uncertain times, all of the events of the past 3-4 make this one stand out in recent memory.
- With much of the national conversation shifting to the discussion of race, we have come to a place where many are looking back on our shared history, including Independence Day itself, with a critical lens. In times such as these, some are gravitating towards extreme positions that focus almost exclusively on either the negatives or the positives of American history. For others, they find themselves stuck somewhere in the middle, feeling pressured to take a public stand one way or the other. What does it mean for us to live faithfully as Christians while also living as citizens of the United States of America? How are we to maintain faithful witness in the midst of tumultuous political times?

Key Point: As believers in the Lord Jesus, we must continually have our hearts and minds shaped by the _____ of the Lord so that our politics, patriotism, and activism will be directed to the ends of glorifying God and serving others.

God's Comfort for His Discouraged Servant— Isaiah 8:11-15

The Prophet

“Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, and that capital city features prominently in his prophecies. Isaiah referred to Jerusalem by using more than 30 names. His easy access to the court and Judah's kings, revealed in his book, suggests that he ministered to the kings of Judah and may have had royal blood in his veins. Jewish tradition made him the cousin of King Uzziah. His communication gifts and his political connections, whatever those may have been, gave him an opportunity to reach the whole nation of Judah. The prophet was married and had at least two sons to whom he gave names that also summarized major themes of his prophecies (8:18): Shearjashub (“*a remnant shall return*”, 7:3), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (“*hastening to the spoil*”, 8:3).”

—Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Isaiah

The Historical Context

The prophet Isaiah ministered during a transition period in the history of the divided kingdom of Israel where relative peace and stability gave way to times of crisis.

1. Isaiah's career spanned the rules of five different kings in Judah.

Under Jotham:

Under Ahaz:

Under Hezekiah:

2. During his ministry, Judah faced a political and economic crisis because of the rise of the Assyrian Empire.
3. During his ministry, Judah faced a spiritual crisis because of the unfaithfulness of both the leaders and the people.
⇒ The nation had come to be characterized by _____ (1:21-23) and _____ (57:4-7)

Isaiah 1:16-17—¹⁶Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Key Point: Isaiah was deeply aware of and surely personally affected by the _____ and _____ situation in Judah as ministered to the people as God's servant.

“The prophet had a very broad appreciation of the political situation in which he lived. He demonstrated awareness of all the nations around his homeland. Judah and Jerusalem were the focal points of his prophecies, but he saw God's will for them down the corridors of time as well as in his own day. He saw that the kingdom that God would establish through His Messiah would include all people. He was a true patriot who denounced evils in his land as well as giving credit where that was due. He condemned religious cults yet remained neutral politically. His understanding of theology was profound. He set forth the wonder and grandeur of Yahweh more ably than any other biblical writer. As a writer, Isaiah is without a peer among the Old Testament prophets. He was a poetic artist who employed a large vocabulary and many literary devices to express his thoughts beautifully and powerfully. Most of his prophecies appear to have been messages that he delivered, so he was probably also a powerful orator.”

—Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Isaiah

Observations from the Passage (8:11-15)

1. The imagery of the passage demonstrates the Lord's deep _____ for the prophet. (8:11a)
2. The concern is manifested in terms of a _____. (8:11b)
3. The prophet should not respond to the political situation in Judah in the _____ of the people around him. (8:12)
"conspiracy" "fear"
4. Instead, the prophet was to call to mind who his God was and respond accordingly! (8:13)
"the Lord of hosts" "holy"

Isa. 8:13b—...Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

5. For those who fear the Lord, He will become for them a _____. (8:14a)
6. For those who walk in the way of the people, He will be the cause of their _____. (8:14b-15)

Key Point: In order to avoid simply falling into the patterns of those around him, Isaiah needed to be _____ of who the Lord was and therefore who he was as His servant.

Applying the Passage

- What are the things going on now in our country politically and socially that could lead you to be in fear?
- When and where are you allowing the Lord to comfort and challenge you with His Word?
- When was the last time you spent time reflecting on your testimony?

1 Pet. 3:13-17—¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.