

**QUESTION: I have a question about Isaiah 6. The preceding chapters outline the sins of God's people and reveal a judgement that is coming. In chapter 6 when God speaks directly to Isaiah commissioning him to speak to His people, what is meant in verses 9 and 10? I find it very confusing.**

Well you are right that to this point Isaiah has been declaring Israel's sin and the certain judgment that is about to come.

So in chapter 6 Isaiah is given the task of preaching. Why? What is the purpose of preaching when Israel is unrepentant and judgment is certain?

Well God uses preaching to do two things. Preaching is not just to save people (by bringing them to repentance and faith). Preaching is also intended sometimes to harden people's hearts in order to judge them.

So for example, Moses preaches to Pharaoh not just once or twice but ten times even though God says that Pharaoh won't listen. Well if Pharaoh won't listen and God already knows that why preach to him so many times? The answer is: Because God knows that the more Pharaoh hears preaching the more he will harden his heart and so God will seem even more righteous in his judging Pharaoh (and God's glory and power will be even more evident).

So back to Isaiah. God knowing Israel's unrepentance and having already decided to judge them sends Isaiah to preach to them so that their hardened sinfulness will be even more evident (by their continual rejection of Isaiah's words) so that God's glory, power and justice will be clearly displayed.

So Isaiah is to preach not in order to save Israel but in order to expose their hearts and judge them.

The same thing occurs today and on Judgment Day some will have heard gospel preaching in order to be saved by it and others will have heard gospel preaching in order to be judged by their rejection of it. Preaching has two aims not one.

Notice also in Isaiah 6:11 that Isaiah asks how long he must engage in this kind of preaching.

He is told to preach this way until the judgment comes. It is a very final kind of judgement because the people will be taken into exile and the land made deserted. In fact Israel will fall like a tree being cut down. And even if 10% of the people survive like a stump in the ground then even that stump is going to be burned.

So Isaiah's preaching is not intended to open their eyes, soften their hearts etc. but rather to further blind non-seeing eyes and further harden non-feeling hearts that God's greatness and majesty and justice and glory might be evident.

Make sense?

Things are very bad when God ordains this kind of preaching. You'll see more of it in chapter 8.

By the way when the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks in parables, he doesn't say 'to make things easy to understand' rather he quotes this passage. Give that some thought!