When God No Longer Speaks

Isaiah 6:9-13
12-27-2023

Introduction: God is Holy (Isaiah 6:1-8)

* As with the Nation of Israel of old, there comes a point when God will no longer speak to the heart of the rebel. Examine your heart; How open are you to God's voice?

What happens to people who don't want to hear God's Word (or listen to His Voice)? God judges them by not speaking to their heart.

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

I. People <u>Hear</u> Truth but <u>Never Understand</u> it (v.9)

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

II. People's Hearts become <u>Calloused to Truth</u> so that it <u>never Penetrates</u> (v.10)

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

III. People <u>Remain Unconverted</u> Until <u>Judgment Day</u> comes (v.11-12)

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

IV. The Lord always has a <u>Small Remnant</u> who listen and are <u>saved</u> (v.13)

Conclusion:

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Introduction: Isaiah 6:1

2 Kings 15:7 – 2 Chronicles 26:23 – Isaiah 6 . . . are all tied together.

King Azariah/Uzziah died 740-739 BC.

Judah was expanding territorially. There was a great deal of security (but it was a false security). Uzziah had built a strong kingdom. Trade had developed. This was a great economic, military, and political society. But self-sufficiency set in. (Materialism will cause self-sufficiency). The leaders and people became spiritually degenerate and greedy. Judah neglected social, moral, and religious obligations. Back in 745 BC (fives years before his death) Tiglath-Pileser ascended the Assyrian throne. The object of Assyria was to control all of Palestine. When Uzziah died Assyria was ready to move in. Thus Isaiah lived in a world of crises.

God is Holy (Isaiah 6:1-8)

Review of Isaiah 6:1-8

- **Isaiah sees God for Who He is (v.1-4)**

  1) **He is a God of <u>Majestic Holiness</u> (v.1)**
     a) He is an <u>eternal</u> King
     b) He is an <u>exalted</u> King

  2) **He is a God of <u>Moral Holiness</u> (v.2-4)**
     a) The seraphim's eyes are not worthy to <u>see</u>
     b) The seraphim's feet are not worthy to <u>serve</u>

- **Isaiah sees Himself for who he is (v.5-7)**

  1) **God's holiness reveals an <u>accurate perspective of self</u> (v.5)**

  2) **God's holiness requires an <u>atoning provision for sin</u> (v.6-7)**

- **Isaiah is now ready and willing to serve God (v.8)**

It was necessary for Isaiah to see the holiness of God before he would be able to do the task God had for him. He would need to know that God was perfectly righteous to keep a rebellious people spiritually deaf and blind.

Having now been cleansed from sin, Isaiah will now be a preacher for God. But what will his "success rate" be? Will people listen? What will the response of the people of Israel be?

Isaiah 28:12

To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. (It's not that they could not hear; It's that they would not hear; Those who deliberately choose to not hear God's message, are in danger of being forever locked into that state, and come to the point where they "could not hear"

Israel had an outward show of "religion" but no internal heart change:
Isaiah 29:13
Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Israel would not seek God
Isaiah 30:1-2
Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: [2] That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

They didn't want the truth (but preferred hearing lies)
Isaiah 30:8-10
Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: [9] That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: [10] Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:

* As with the Nation of Israel of old, there comes a point when God will no longer speak to the heart of the rebel. Examine your heart; How open are you to God's voice?

Why does Jesus continually say to the 7 churches of Revelation...
He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches
(Re 2:7; Re 2:11; Re 2:17; Re 2:29; Re 3:6; Re 3:13; Re 3:22)

Answer: Not everyone has ears to hear. They have ears that work. Their ears pick up audible sound waves. But they cannot understand what the Holy Spirit is Saying in God's Word. They don't want to understand. God must create a "want to" in their hearts. He is under no obligation to do so, however.

When people do have the privilege to hear God's Word, but do not believe it or apply it to their lives, God reserves the right to judge them and harden them in that blind and deaf state.

Pr 29:1 He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

There comes a time in a person's life when after hearing the Word of God and rejecting it, he becomes forever unable to understand it. There comes a time when God hides Himself from that individual.

That is why God gives us this admonition: Isa 55:6 - "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near"

Isaiah 6:10 is an often quoted passage in the N.T. (six times: Mt. 13:13-15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; Jn. 12:40; Acts 28:25-28; Ro. 11:8). Both Jesus and Paul make application of this passage:

- *Mt 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*
- *John 12:40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*
- *Ac 28:27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

What happens to people who don't want to hear God's Word (or listen to His Voice)? God judges them by not speaking to their heart.

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

I. People <u>Hear</u> Truth but <u>Never Understand</u> it (v.9)

Isaiah 6:9
And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

The problem with the people not understanding had nothing to do with how the message was presented by Isaiah:

Isaiah taught and preached "line upon line and precept upon precept" (Isaiah 28:10)

The people of Israel actually chided Isaiah for the simplicity of his message:

Isaiah 28:9-10
Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. [10] For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

The problem with the people not understanding had nothing to do with some fault or inadequacy in Isaiah:

He had been cleansed and prepared for ministry by God. (Isaiah 6:7)

What was the problem?

See: John 12:36-41
John 12:38
"Esaias" = Isaiah 6:10 & 53:1

"The arm of the Lord" – is a reference to Jesus Christ.
Why is He referred to as the "arm of the Lord?" Just as arms do things, make things, accomplish things, so everything God the Father ever did, He did through the instrumentality of His Son.

---He created through His Son
---He led Israel in the Old Testament by His Son
---He provided redemption by His Son
---He sustains creation by His Son
---He will rule and reign by His Son
---He will judge the world by His Son

"They could not believe" - They were not able to believe; did not have the independent ability to believe.

Because they "would not" believe, God made their hearts so that they "could not" believe (EX: Pharaoh – Because he hardened his heart the Lord then solidified that hardness and kept it that way to fulfill His purposes through Pharaoh.

Once light has been rejected, God is under no obligation to grant sinners more light.

"When a person starts to resist the light, something begins to change within him; and he comes to the place where he cannot believe. There is 'judicial blindness' that God permits to come over the eyes of people who do not take the truth seriously." (Wiersbe, p. 343).

v. 40
Truth must be known (**"eyes"**)
Truth must be understood (**"heart"**)
Truth must be applied (**'converted"**)

v. 41
Isaiah saw Christ's glory (Is. 6:1ff). The reference to **"His"** is the same reference as **"Him"** (v. 42), which is Christ.

Christ is the "arm of the Lord." He is the Lord, high and lifted up to whom the angels cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. . ."

v. 42

Not everyone is permanently kept blind by the sovereign Lord. He does choose to open the eyes of some.

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

II. People's Hearts become <u>Calloused to Truth</u> so that it <u>never Penetrates</u> (v.10)

Isaiah 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 heart, and convert, and be healed.

God tells Isaiah to make the people of Israel's heart "fat." "Fat" means thick (as a callous) Callouses form by something making contact with the skin repeatedly. Eventually the skin thickens to the point that you do not feel certain sensations as easily as you once did.

Isaiah's repetitious teaching (and warning of Impending Judgment) would have such an effect on Israel. Their hearts would become calloused to the truth.

See: Matthew 13:9-17

Review the parable of the sower, seed, and soil.

Note: <u>V. 9</u>

The disciples knew that the multitudes did not understand the messages. Because they were concerned that their Master's words be received and that the people not miss the lessons, they question Jesus.

"Unto them" - The disciples noticed that Jesus did not speak plainly in public like He did to them, so they were curious as to the reason.

"Parable" - was an analogy taken from everyday life used to illustrate a spiritual truth. The word literally means "to cast alongside." It describes a teaching method whereby the teacher, in order to explain a truth, would place a story of example alongside of the truth in order to make the truth clear.

A parable required explanation in order for it to be rightly understood. For a particular reason, Jesus would often leave the crowd "hanging" -- that is, he would not give them the interpretation of the parable, like He would to His disciples (EX: V. 18ff).

He would speak parables in public, then would explain them in private.

V. 11

The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" - formerly hidden truths about God's Kingdom, which are now revealed.

"But to <u>them</u> it is <u>not</u> given" - Jesus is saying, "I am speaking in parables because it is not permissible for them to comprehend the truth I am giving."

In effect Jesus is saying that parables are given more to conceal truth than to reveal truth.

The Lord was actually being merciful by concealing the message from those who really didn't want to hear it! Reason: To hear the Truth is to become accountable for that truth. They would have heightened their condemnation every time they heard a clear presentation of the gospel yet rejected it.

The parables would either "turn some people off" or incite the interest of others who would inquire as to the meaning.

Many times we come up against a difficult passage of Scripture. It is at times like that, that we should seriously beseech God for the right interpretation.

The parables were given to:

--Stir up the interest of those who were diligent enough to seek out the meaning
and
--To prevent the understanding of those who could "care less" about the meaning.

Throughout life, a person either gains or loses. He either misses out on great opportunity or cashes in. This is a law of every realm:

--It is the law of nature: "The early bird gets the worm"
--It is the law of man: Energy and effort are rewarded with productivity. Those who labor, are diligent and persistent, see, hear, and learn. They are in a position to get more and more. But the disinterested, neglectful, and lazy lose out.

V. 12
God throughout history used language as a form of judgment: Examples -

1) The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11) (Gen. 11:6-8 -*And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.")*

2) Foreign languages spoken to Israel (Is. 28:11-12 - *"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.")*
Cp. Dt. 28:19-50; Is. 33:19

3) The sign gift of tongues (I Cor. 14:21-22 - *"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.*

Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.")

"Whosoever <u>hath</u>" - hath what?

Whosoever hath <u>eyes</u> willing to see, <u>ears</u> willing to hear, and a <u>heart</u> willing to accept (cp. v. 13-16).

Whosoever hath a willingness to absorb, believe, embrace, and apply the truth, Jesus says, I will give that person more truth.

In a parallel passage, Jesus said: *"Unto you that <u>hear shall more be given"</u>* (Mk. 4:24)

Again, He said, *"Take heed <u>how ye hear</u>: for whosoever hath to him shall be given. . ."* (Lk. 8:18).

Do you know who the Lord can teach? He teaches those who have a desire to learn, a hunger for truth, a zeal for spiritual wisdom. They are willing to believe and obey the truth they learn.

"Whosoever hath not" - Whoever does not have a receptive eye, ear, and heart will lose the truth they were given (this is a description of verse 4 - The unreceptive heart that would not take in the seed (*"Word"*) had the seed taken away!)

"One of the most tragic sights in all the world is to see people sit under the most glorious message, and fall asleep or be listless, inattentive, disinterested, or willfully hardened and close-minded" (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible, Matthew, Vol. 1, p. 296).

The Lord can teach those who are faithful stewards of the truth He has already entrusted to them. (EX:" The Parable of the Talents - Mt. 25:14-30 *V. 29)

V. 13

--How does one see, yet not see?
[They saw Jesus yet did not see Him for who He was]

--How does one hear, yet not hear?
[They heard Jesus speak, but did not hear what He said]
[Their ears heard sounds, but never understood the message]

V. 14

This prophecy, given to Isaiah to forewarn him of the hardness of the people he was to preach to. He was to preach to israel, yet they would not comprehend or know what he said.

V. 15

"Waxed gross" = lit. to thicken. It describes a callousness which results in a dullness of feeling.

Their hearts became impregnable; could not be penetrated.

"Dull of hearing" - to become hard of hearing; to become practically deaf to the truth. (ILLUS: those Jews who heard Stephen, stopped their ears - Acts 7:57).

It's a sad state to be able to hear, yet to not get the message.

"Their eyes they have closed" -

--They chose to not see the truth.
--They deliberately decided to remain spiritually ignorant.
--They of their own will made up their minds that they didn't want to see God's way.

NOTE: To ignore the truth will not change the truth. EX: Children will often play the game of blocking their eyes and thinking that you can't see them, or that you are not there.

People can avoid the Word of God and His ways in 101 different ways, yet that will not alter it or make it go away.

"Lest at any time" - for fear that something they don't want to see might s lip into their spiritual vision, and they might have subsequent feelings of guilt or responsibility because of that which they saw, they keep their eyes shut.

"Converted" - to turn around; to change your direction of going away from God, to going toward Him (Is. 55:6-7 - *"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon")*

Many are afraid of being "converted." They are afraid of having to lose out on their own way. Some are fearful of giving up their sin. Some are fearful of becoming "religious."

However, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain!

All you lose is:

--Your present status as an "orphan" -- you become an adopted son
--Your present status as an "alien" -- You become a citizen of God's kingdom
--Your sin, guilt, and eternal condemnation (Rom. 8:1)

"And I should heal them" - They had everything to gain!

ILLUS: of someone who has the symptoms of a serious illness, but is afraid to find out what it is, or is afraid to go to the doctor.

Jesus is the Great Physician who can heal the sin-sick soul.

He wanted to remove their spiritual cancer. He wanted to replace their defective heart with a new one. He longed to give sight to their eyes and sound to their ears, but they did not want it!

V. 16

"Blessed" **=** fortunate

How wonderful it is to sere and hear; how much more wonderful it is to see and hear the Gospel of God; to discern God's plan of salvation; to comprehend His Word

Your eyes and ears are either blessed, or they are not. The opposite of blessedness is to be under a curse.

Many saints of the Old Testament longed to see and hear the Messiah. They hoped that theirs would be the generation that would have the great privilege of welcoming the Christ. (I Pet. 1:10-11 - *"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."*)

What an awesome privilege I have had. I am so fortunate to have heard the gospel as a 16 year old boy, to attend a fundamental Bible-centered church, to enjoy a Bible college and seminary that were committed to God's Word without compromise.

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

III. People <u>Remain Unconverted</u> Until <u>Judgment Day</u> comes (v.11-12)

V. 11 – Isaiah asks, "How long shall I preach and the people not listen?" Answer: Until the land is utterly emptied of her people who will be carried away into captivity.

God is saying, "Isaiah, you peach, but I know they will not repent." Our responsibility as preachers is not to get <u>results</u> but to do what God told us to do (proclaim the truth – 2 Tim. 4:1-4 – "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who sdhall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.")

The captivity of the northern tribes of Israel would not come for about two decades (20 years) in 722 BC. The southern tribes of Judah would be over a century and a half away (586 BC – by Babylon). So Isaiah had to preach to hardened people for the rest of his life.

Isaiah 65:12

Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.

Isaiah 5:24

Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

When God's Wisdom is rejected Judgment follows:

Proverbs 1:24-33

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; [25] But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: [26] I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; [27] When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. [28] Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: [29] For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: [30] They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. [31] Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. [32] For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. [33] But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

When God stops speaking to the rebel's heart...

IV. The Lord always has a <u>Small Remnant</u> who listen and are <u>saved</u> (v.13)

v. 13 – "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

A tenth portion – a tithe of people to God. One tenth of Judah (the poor of the land who would be left by Nebuchadnezzar) would remain in the land, yet would still face the negative results and hardship ("be eaten"). Still a remnant of others would return to the land after the 70 years of captivity in Babylon. The trees (people) of Israel would be cut down by the enemy but out of the stump of those trees, life would sprout and spring up, with a fragrance of the terebinth tree.

Ro 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

"Remnant" = that which is left; that which remains. In every age, God has always had a remnant of God-fearing people (EX: Noah, Abraham, Daniel and his 3 friends in Babylon; Elijah and the 7,000 who did not bow to Baal - I Ki. 19:18)

Isaiah's ministry seemed futile. But it was not. He (like us) needed a "long-range perspective on his ministry or else he would fee like he was accomplishing nothing" (Wiersbe, p. 30).

Are you part of this remnant? How well do you hear God's Word? Do you want to hear?

Just as there is a "sin which leads to death" (I Jn. 5:16), there is a rebellious deafness which leads to permanent spiritual deafness. Does God still speak to you?

Conclusion:

Isaiah 66:2
For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Even believers need to search their hearts to make sure that there is an openness to receive the Word, and to make sure there are no obstacles to prevent the Word from being understood.

Illumination describes - the Holy Spirits' enlightenment of man's mind to comprehend the written Word of God.

The Bible's Teaching on Illumination:

1. Illumination is needed by the unsaved.

a. The unsaved ("natural man") is without spiritual understanding. He views spiritual things (as revealed in the Bible) as foolishness (I Cor. 2:14).

b. The unsaved man has a blinded mind
(II Cor. 4:4)

2. Illumination begins at salvation.

a. Heb. 6:4 - "once enlightened"

b. Heb. 10:32 - "ye were illuminated"

3. Illumination is a work of the Holy Spirit
(I Cor. 2:9-16)

a. The Holy Spirit reveals God's Word only to believers (I Cor. 2:9-10)

b. The Holy Spirit reveals the "deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10)

c. The Holy Spirit convicted men of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn. 16:8).

d. The Holy Spirit is our guide into all truth (jn. 16:13).