

# Isaiah (Old Testament Figures)

*A charred stump, a holy seed, and the gospel according to Isaiah*

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| SPEAKER  | Matt Ryniker                                                                                                                         |
| DATE     | Sunday, May 8, 2022                                                                                                                  |
| PASSAGES | Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Isaiah 6:1-13; Isaiah 11:1-4; Isaiah 9:1-7; Isaiah 49:3-8; Isaiah 1:2-31; Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 4:2; Psalm 115:4-8 |
| MESSAGE  | Begins at 1:10:51 in the service                                                                                                     |

## THE BIG IDEA

Isaiah told Judah what no one wanted to hear: God himself was going to cut the nation down to a stump. But in that stump was a holy seed – a branch from Jesse, a servant who would be marred, pierced and crushed for our iniquities and then, inexplicably, live and see his offspring. Our part is to know we are the charred stump; his part is to finish a rescue as unstoppable as the judgment.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Read the prophets the way you would read a novel or a long email – whole, as a story. That alone helps comprehension.
- ◆ If you had met Isaiah in the flesh he would have made you uncomfortable. We honour the prophets the way Jesus said people build tombs for prophets their fathers killed.
- ◆ Isaiah's charge was rebellion and open oppression, and the judgment he announced came from God himself, an unquenchable fire no one could stop.
- ◆ Israel became like the idols it trusted: eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear.
- ◆ A tree metaphor runs through the book: an oak that withers and burns, a stump, a holy seed, a shoot from the stump of Jesse, a branch that bears fruit.
- ◆ The branch becomes a servant who is also called Israel, who is high and lifted up like God, and who is crushed for our sins and yet prolongs his days.

- ◆ We are the destroyed stump, not the Christ. And God's plan to win his bride from the nations is as unstoppable as his judgment.

► 1:10:51

Before preaching, Matt asked Kevin Daniel, with his wife Courtney beside him, to step back into his former role directing Hope's arts ministry, and the board and elders prayed over them. Then, back to the Old Testament series, which has reached the major prophets – with Matt's advice to read Isaiah the way you would read a novel or an email: the whole thing, as a story.

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## Who invited that guy?

► 1:12:32

Matt loves ancient peoples and languages, and what strikes him is how much they were like us: we like eating, we hate being embarrassed in front of our families, we prefer comfort. So it is unhelpful to imagine the prophets as bearded men in robes everyone simply liked. Isaiah is on a stained-glass window somewhere; "if you met Isaiah in the flesh he would have made you uncomfortable. It would have not been stained glass, man. It would have been, who invited that guy?"

► 1:14:16

Then, apologising to any guests, he told a story meant to make the room uncomfortable. You are at Chili's with your family when a scraggly mountain man walks into the middle of the dining room and asks: if a magic box paid out a thousand dollars with a ten percent chance someone dies, would you press the button? Ten thousand at five percent? A hundred thousand at one percent? Then he starts talking about abortion and throwing pictures on people's food: if you don't know whether it is a life, why risk it? The room erupts, your own family starts arguing, your kids are looking at you – and the worst part is how spineless you feel as you push on awkwardly with your meal.

► 1:17:25

"That is how I feel the prophets must have come off." A prophet in the Jerusalem market shouts that we have forsaken our God, and the fish-seller says, "Dude, today I'm selling fish." Jesus said people build tombs for the prophets while being of the same stock as those who killed them ([Matthew 23:29–31](#)). "If I met him, he probably wouldn't like me, because I'm wishy-washy." Picture a half-naked prophet building tiny siege tanks on Sixth Street. "Isaiah, chill." But there was no chill; the word burned in him.

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## Isaiah's world

► 1:19:41

Isaiah began prophesying in the year King Uzziah died, two generations after Joash. Tradition says he was sawn in half. He was married to a prophetess and gave at least two sons odd prophetic names. Assyria was growing; when King Ahaz was pressured to join an anti-Assyrian league, he ran to Assyria for protection – against Assyria. “Classic.” Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser and Sargon took it as weakness, while Isaiah said God himself was behind what was coming. Chapters 1–39 carry judgment leading to exile; chapters 40 onward look from exile toward restoration.

► 1:22:06

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: ‘Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.’”

ISAIAH 1:2–3 ↗

These are not pets or knick-knacks; they are God’s own children. How serious is he? “Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom... you people of Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:10). Fighting words. “We read it at our morning quiet times with our coffee. They heard it in the marketplace.” And beyond rebellion there was open oppression: “Seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Isaiah 1:16–17).

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## A tree, a fire, a stump

► 1:23:42

Judgment would lead not only to destruction but into God’s own plan of redemption, and Isaiah traces it with a recurring tree. First the destruction: “You shall be like an oak whose leaf withers... and the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them” (Isaiah 1:28–31).

► 1:25:37

Fire that cannot be quenched, Matt said, does not mean burning forever; it means unstoppable, like a tank coming at you. Jeremiah uses the same language for the gates of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 17:27). The prophet is not saying “repent because there’s an enemy at the gates” but “repent because the destroyer is God himself, and no one’s going to stop him.” Is the whole Israel project scrapped, then? No: “In that

day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious” (Isaiah 4:2) – survivors, and some part of them a living branch.

► 1:27:15

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!... Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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, the LORD of hosts!”

ISAIAH 6:1-8 ↗

The Lord “high and lifted up” – a phrase that will return for the servant. A coal touches Isaiah’s lips, his guilt is taken away, and when God asks whom he shall send, “I think Isaiah’s tune changed appropriately”: here I am, send me. The message he is given is strange: keep on hearing but do not understand; keep on seeing but do not perceive.

► 1:29:54

Matt heard two things in it. God is dead set on what he is about to do. And Israel has become like what it trusts: idols with mouths that do not speak, eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear – “those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them” (Psalm 115:4-8). How long, Isaiah asks? Until the cities lie waste. In the judges’ days you hoped God would raise up a deliverer; this time your house crumbles, “and God did it too.”

► 1:31:11

“And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump.”

ISAIAH 6:13 ↗

“That’s bizarre – both a seed and a stump at the same time.” Matt summarised: Israel is wayward and broadcasting confused messages about Yahweh; God plans destruction; and a remnant is promised, tied to a stump, a seed, a branch, somehow more glorious than anything Israel’s kings had achieved.

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## Light in the darkness, a shoot from the stump

► 1:33:01

Those who trusted mediums instead of God would look to the earth and find “distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish” (Isaiah 8:22). “Do you feel Christmassy yet? We’re almost there.” Then Galilee of the

nations – seven hundred years before Jesus – and “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:1–2).

► 1:34:01

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace... The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

ISAIAH 9:6–7 ↗

► 1:35:22

Back to the tree: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him” (Isaiah 11:1–4). Jesse was David’s father, so this is a Davidic king, walking in the wisdom and fear of the Lord that Israel failed to walk in. “At this point all that’s left for Israel to do is to be a destroyed stump, and that’s something I can relate to.” This king judges the poor with righteousness and strikes the earth with the rod of his mouth – as in Revelation, where the armies line up “like the hordes of Mordor” and Christ fights with the sword from his mouth (Revelation 19:15).

► 1:37:37

Matt skipped most of the oracles against the nations, pausing on Hezekiah, who briefly humbled himself – “the angels hacking away at the tree of Israel” stop, and Assyria is held back. Two chapters later he shows his treasures to envoys from Babylon, the very people who would carry them off (Isaiah 39), “and the angels keep going.”

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## The servant

► 1:39:21

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1–4). The Spirit upon him links him to the branch. Israel could barely bring justice to its own widows; this servant brings it to the nations, without even crying aloud.

► 1:39:55

Then the riddle. “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isaiah 49:3) – second person singular, Matt checked. One servant who *is* Israel, whose job is “to bring Jacob back to him.” How many kings and prophets tried and failed at that? And it is too light a thing to stop there: “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Yet this servant needs God to

answer him “in a day of salvation,” and is himself given “as a covenant to the people,” saying to prisoners, Come out.

► 1:43:16

“Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you – his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance... so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.”

ISAIAH 52:13–15 ↗

Everywhere else in Isaiah, “high and lifted up” is said of Yahweh: “there’s something weirdly godly about this future servant.” And note the reversal: Isaiah’s hearers see and do not perceive, but the nations “understand.” “That’s kind of a slap in the face.”

► 1:44:56

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

ISAIAH 53:4–6 ↗

► 1:46:23

Marred, pierced, crushed: “he’s going to die, that’s what that adds up to.” It was the will of the Lord to crush him; his soul makes an offering for guilt. And yet “he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days,” and “by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous” (Isaiah 53:10–11). Knowledge was exactly what Israel lacked. “He died a gruesome death, and yet for whatever reason he’s just alive again – and not just alive, a long time alive. Isaiah the prophet’s full of surprises.”

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## The gospel according to Isaiah

► 1:48:31

That is why Matt calls this the gospel according to Isaiah: written seven hundred years before Jesus, already popular when Jesus preached from it. Like Jerusalem, we do not like our sin shoved in our faces. But if the Lord’s glory appeared before us, we would know, as Isaiah did, that we are people of

unclean lips – not because anyone was being mean, it would simply pierce us – and that the only way to stand before him is his own cleansing.

► 1:49:37

*“Our role in the plan of rescue is to be a destroyed, charred stump. Can you do that? As long as we know our roles. We don’t want to have a Christ complex.”*

There is a Christ, a specific anointed one, ready even in the destruction, who took the wages of our sin so that we could be declared righteous. And just as surely as God planned the destruction and the redemption, he will have his bride; the nations will hear, and he will do the sprinkling.

► 1:50:52

“He is a force to be reckoned with. No one can keep him from his bride.” The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea ([Habakkuk 2:14](#)). Look at all the church leaders, thought leaders and evangelists and think it is not enough? “You’re right, it’s not. We’re a charred stump. But in him, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish his work.” Matt prayed that God would draw our focus off ourselves and onto the holy seed, the glorious branch, and teach us to long for the day his justice and peace ring true forevermore.

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**FOR FURTHER STUDY****SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Matthew 23:29–31](#)
- [Isaiah 1:2–3](#)
- [Isaiah 1:10](#)
- [Isaiah 1:16–17](#)
- [Isaiah 1:28–31](#)
- [Jeremiah 17:27](#)
- [Isaiah 4:2](#)
- [Isaiah 6:1–8](#)
- [Psalm 115:4–8](#)
- [Isaiah 6:13](#)
- [Isaiah 8:22](#)
- [Isaiah 9:1–2](#)
- [Isaiah 9:6–7](#)
- [Isaiah 11:1–4](#)
- [Revelation 19:15](#)
- [Isaiah 39](#)
- [Isaiah 42:1–4](#)
- [Isaiah 49:3–8](#)
- [Isaiah 52:13–15](#)
- [Isaiah 53:4–6](#)
- [Isaiah 53:10–11](#)
- [Habakkuk 2:14](#)

**FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP**

1. How did Matt's Chili's story land with you, and what does it suggest about how the prophets were actually received?
2. Psalm 115 says we become like what we trust. What do you trust that could leave you seeing without perceiving?
3. Trace Isaiah's tree with your group – oak, stump, holy seed, shoot, branch. What does each stage say about judgment and hope?
4. What does it mean for you to accept the role of the "charred stump" rather than a Christ complex?
5. Isaiah 53 says the servant was crushed for our iniquities. Where do you need to rest on that this week instead of on your own effort?

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

**Watch the full message:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxfj8nHUD8w&t=4251s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.