

Ps 93:1,2
 Hy 1A
 Ps 83:1,2,7
 Ps 96:3,4
 Hy 63:1,2
 Isaiah 8
 1 Peter 3:8-17
 Isaiah 8:13

Yarrow, December 31, 2010

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

End of year .: time to look back, prepare overview of what 2010 was.

- In doing so can focus on
 - Economic circumstances of nation: things slowed down, and we as congregation have experienced that; cream is off the prosperity we used to have.
 - Political developments of nation: things calm, for which we thankful. But internationally there's ongoing unrest; think of Korean Peninsula, think of rising influence of India and shrinking influence of USA. This may well lead world in different direction than we've seen...
 - Talk re climate change –are things warming or cooling?? How this influence way of living?
 - Change in social media → patterns of facebook, twitter, etc. Will affect your life, whether like it or not.
 - Moral decay of society; John Elton and same-sex partner David Furnish have son – celebrated in media; what that celebration mean for future??
 - Some of us have battled with health issues, and will continue to do so....
 - Family struggles....
- Yet the big question is not: what are the specific issues that filled our minds, thoughts. You/I had no control over economic, political, social, even health issues of 2010; they outside our range of responsibility. But we are responsible for how *respond* to what happens. So this is the big question: why did you respond to the details of 2010 as you did?? What drove/motivated your response to developments of 2010??
 - This question important – for habits we followed in determining how we responded to challenges of 2010 will also determine how we respond to challenges of 2011.
 - Isaiah tells Israel (and .: us) how to respond.

IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE REGARD THE LORD ALMIGHTY AS HOLY.

1. Why this instruction is given
2. How to carry out this instruction
3. Who is to carry it out

1. Why is this instruction given?

Words of text part of God's instruction to Isaiah beginning in vs 11.

- See LORD come to Isaiah, lay a strong hand on prophet's shoulder, grasp tight, give stiff warning. We realize: urgency. This important.

- Note name of God here: LORD = sovereign God of ch 6:1ff.
- Insists: “don’t follow way of this people”.
 - Cf 1:11ff; 2:6f, 5:11f. Ie, mention God, go to temple/church, pray, but not *depend* on God. Instead follow wisdom of time, cf 2:6ff; cf 8:19. Meanwhile, idolize high life, cf 5:11f.
- Why God give Isaiah this warning? Due to temptations facing prophet. Appears that when Isaiah warns people (in previous chapters) that they displease God, they charge him with conspiracy (vs 12). Ie, out of step with times, ∴ essentially subversive, a nuisance, a threat to society....
 - We realise: Can occur on different levels, of course, eg, official persecution, ie, imprisonment....
 - Or: mocked, shunned, scorned....
 - This a reaction we recognize, and don’t like....
- This the setting of text: instead of falling for temptation to ‘follow the way of this people’, ie, not take God for real and so not ask for His will, Isaiah to *regard LORD Almighty as holy*.
- This needs more detail. Recall political/economic situation.
 - 7:1: kings of Aram (Rezin) and Israel (Pekah) march on Jerusalem to install puppet (cf 7:6). ∴ great fear in Ahaz and his people (7:2).
 - God sent Isaiah to speak to Ahaz → conversation of 7:4ff: not to fear these two kings, for God will deliver from them. But: Ahaz to believe; otherwise not stand (cf 9b). Not believe.
 - Even so, deliverance from two kings will come – yet followed by worse problem, ie, king of Assyria, cf 7:20,25.
 - Obvious: political turmoil, economy crashes, social upheaval.
 - Big question: **how one to respond** to all this?!!
 - Urgency of this question increases for Isaiah because of God’s instruction in chap 8. Series of three messages:
 - Vs 1: large scroll → we to think of billboard as we see on roadside.
 - Isaiah to write on it: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz = quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil. Of course, to be posted somewhere in Jerusalem for public to see.
 - Meaning? Only enemies plunder, despoil. These enemies quick/swift. Obvious: you want to defend property/city. Not a mention here; enemies come and immediately they access plunder.... Point: they too powerful for resistance to mean anything....
 - Implication: ahead are political and economic woe! ∴ Q to people of Jerusalem: **how respond??**
 - Vs 3: Isaiah’s wife → son → name same as on billboard. Point: *underline the message*: ahead is political and economic turmoil. ∴ **Q: how respond??**
 - Q urgent. When turmoil to hit?? Cf vs 4: before child can say ‘daddy’/‘mommy’ Damascus and Samaria carried off. This obviously affect trade in Jerusalem; lose your markets/suppliers....
 - But vs 5: third message: people of Jerusalem “rejected ... waters of Shiloah”, ie, not respond as ought.

- Pt: Jerusalem on hill, had no water supply of own (till days of Hezekiah; dug well, with underground tunnel to water supply outside city...). ∴ aqueduct to carry water into city (cf 7:3). But vulnerable in event of enemy attack...
 - This is how almighty LORD ordained layout of city, so that people of Jerusalem had to/mean to depend on Lord for water, as farmer on rain.... Cf Deuteronomy 11:11f.
 - But people don't depend on LORD. Placard/baby announces turmoil, but no repentance, no turning from sin, no seeking LORD.
 - ∴ promise of vs 7: mighty floodwaters of Euphrates coming. Can't be literal; too much high country between Euphrates and Jerusalem. Pt is 7ab: king of Assyria (who will cart off Syria and Israel) will wash over Judah too. See vs 8: waters rise in Judah 'up to the neck'.
 - So: not drown, but your house/crop destroyed.
 - Ie, economic turmoil!! What this do to jobs! To harvest! To infrastructure! Devastation....
- Imagery changes to "outspread wings" = bird → huge: cover land. Big bird = bird of prey.... Ie, more devastation...
 - ∴ closing word of vs 8: "Immanuel!" = "God with us", ie, God is present in judgment because of Judah's hardness of heart..., cf 6:9,11....
- True: Lord also has Isaiah speak words of vs 9f, ie, no matter how hard Assyria tries to drown Judah/Jerusalem, will not succeed, ie, not beyond neck. For "God is with us" = Immanuel....
- Now here the point for Isaiah: as he keeps warning the people (cf billboard, son) they accuse him of being traitor, out of step with community. *How will he respond??* More: how God want Him to respond? Sets hand on shoulder: what He say??
 - Q important to us: we also get told we out of step. Not all in our community appreciate that we send children to own school, don't participate in community worship services, etc.
 - So: how Isaiah to respond? How we??
 - This Q important not only in what we see in community's reaction to us re school/church. Also important in how we assess community in other developments.... (see introduction).
 - ∴ 2nd point: what does regarding LORD as holy look like??

2. How to carry out this instruction?

Isaiah told to "regard [God] as holy"

- 'holy' = special, unique, set apart.
 - *How* God is holy, set apart, unique evident from Isaiah 6:3, ie, angels in His presence know Him well, ∴ cry out their 3x holy.
 - Isaiah to *regard* God as holy, ie, share angels manner of responding to God's identity.
- Note: in vision of Isaiah 6, prophet already echoed angels' response to God's identity
 - Cf 6:5: cried out his "woe to me!" Ie, here fear of God, ie, such esteem for God that he knew he had no life in self, dependent on God.
 - Knew that in face/presence of this God, he'd perish. Cf Mt 10:28 → this God can cast him into hell.

- What saved him was gospel of Jesus Christ as caught in the coal from the altar (6:6).
- Because of this escape, gospel of forgiveness of sins, Isaiah keen to serve, cf vs 8.
 - This service includes preparing a billboard announcing coming calamity, calling son with same name ∴ attracting ridicule of people (cf 8:12).
- Now Isaiah told: despite ridicule you get, being told out of step, etc, *keep regarding God as holy*. Ie, don't cave to sentiment of society that puts God's holiness in background.
 - This specifically so because of *identity* of this God. For: *why* would the enemy be 'quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil'? Why river of Assyria flood Judah/Jerusalem?
- God is "LORD Almighty" = sovereign Creator who established covenant of grace with sinners. This God deals with sinners according to covenant promises, ie, blessings on obedience (take responsibility seriously), curses on disobedience (ie, *not* take responsibility seriously).
 - Leviticus 26 → events of Isaiah 8 foretold.
 - Point: in calamity of day, look further than to politics or economic mismanagement! Cause of trials lay in God's holiness and peoples' thumbing nose at Him.
 - Then proper response to changing developments of day *not* refinance or change government or be environmentally more sensitive, etc (though may be place for all that)
 - Proper response was first: *take God seriously*, ie, regard Him as holy even as angels did & as Isaiah initially did when confronted with who God is.
 - His identity demands a holy fear/dread! ∴ strong allergy to sin, and keen eagerness to do His will no matter what names people call you or what reaction that provokes.
 - Work out colour....
- This behaviour generates response from God, ie, vs 14a: He will be a sanctuary, ie, place of refuge/protection in face of economic/political turbulence. Not mean you untouched by circumstances. But does mean He supplies for needs, protects.
 - But fail to regard God as holy → stumble over LORD as over stone, cf vs 14.
 - Or He be trap/snare ∴ many broken, captured, cf 14b,15.
- We realize: if God not change, here instruction for us.
 - ∴ 3rd point:

3. Who to carry out this instruction?

Who to "regard God as holy"? Ie, for whom this instruction?

- Can say: for all. True. For all must take LORD seriously.
 - Note word 'you' in text is plural, not singular.
 - Yet reference cannot be to all people of Jerusalem/Judah as whole, for in vs 14 is contrast. Ie, for some God a sanctuary, for others God a stone over which they stumble. These 'others' of vs 14 are "both houses of Israel" = northern tribes (capital is Samaria) and southern tribe of Judah (capital is Jerusalem).

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- Point: is distinction in Jerusalem/Judah between those who faithful to LORD and those who not. Some in Judah/Jerusalem will trip over LORD, but Isaiah and those with him *are shown way not to trip over/stumble over stone = LORD.*
 - Ie, some of Isaiah's hearers respond with faith/obedience, others not, cf Isaiah 6:9ff...
 - But those who have responded with faith *to continue to regard God as holy*, even though pressure of society is contrary.
 - Here the instruction for us. As we close a year, we look back to what made this year important. What made year important is not the political or economical changes, or even the developments in social media or norms. These things can catch our attention, and we can oooh and aaaah over them, but they take attention away from what made 2010 important: LORD Almighty!! All developments of year in terms of human activity but tools in His hand to further His purposes; they not ends of themselves.
 - Yet latter is precisely how world sees these developments, and temptation there for us to share that myopic vision.
 - 1 Peter 3:15