

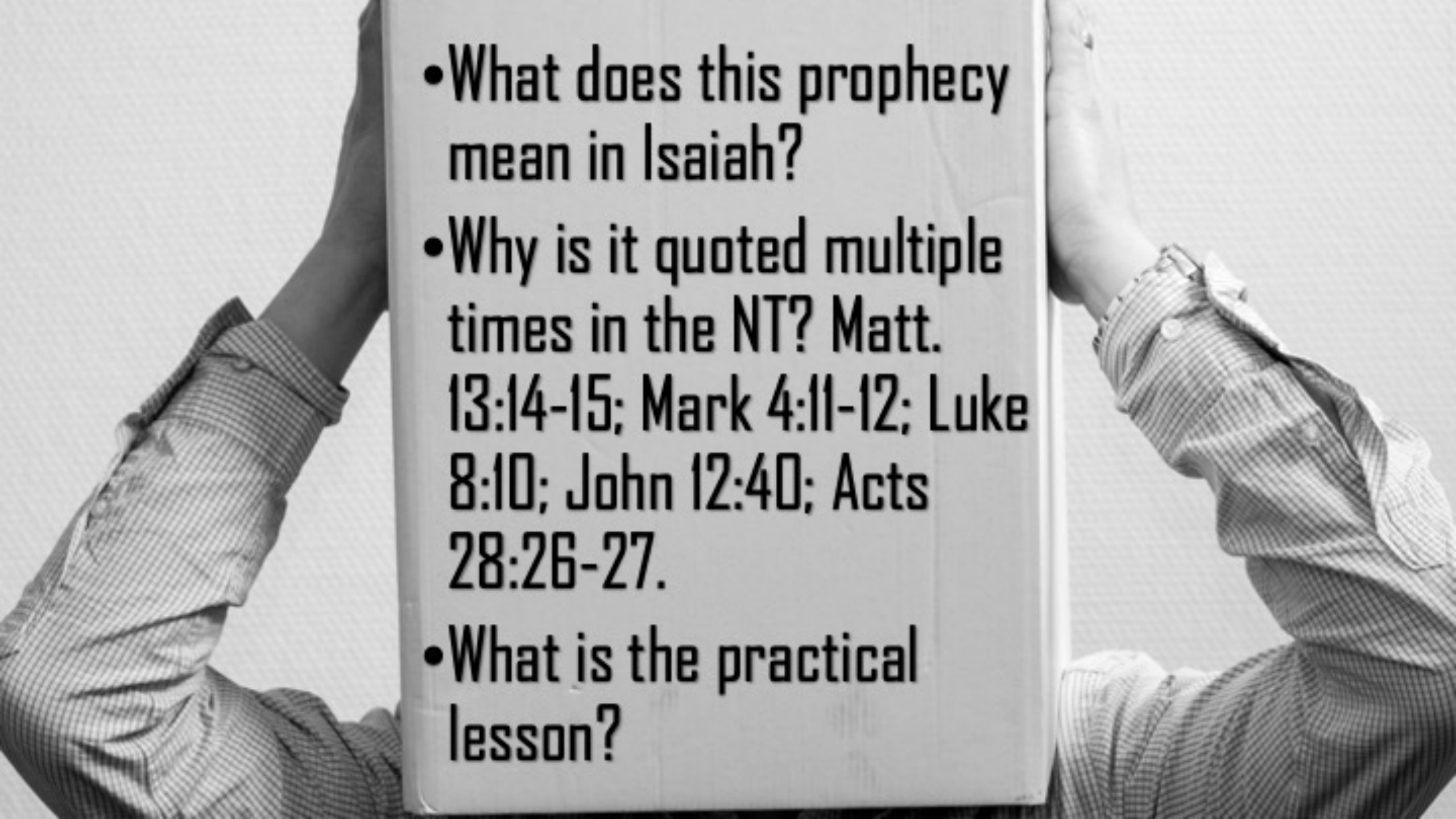
A black and white photograph of a person from the chest up, holding a large, plain white rectangular box over their head with both hands. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt. The background is a neutral, light-colored wall. The text "SEE, HEAR, & UNDERSTAND" is printed in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters on the front of the box.

**SEE, HEAR, &  
UNDERSTAND**

And He said, "Go, and tell this people; 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.' Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim,

Lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed."

**ISAIAH 6:9-10**

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- A black and white photograph showing a person's arms holding a large white board. The person is wearing a striped, long-sleeved shirt with the sleeves rolled up. The board contains three bullet points in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.
- What does this prophecy mean in Isaiah?
  - Why is it quoted multiple times in the NT? Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-27.
  - What is the practical lesson?

# ISAIAH'S COMMISSION

- Isaiah 6 is a recollection of the prophet's mission from God. After witnessing the majesty of the Lord, and receiving reassurance that he has been cleansed of his sins, Isaiah enthusiastically volunteers for a job that will prove to be mostly fruitless (in his lifetime, at least).
- "Go and tell this people..." It's not that the content of his prophesying included these exact words. Rather, this is the response to the content. This Hebraism expresses "result" as though it were "purpose."
- While many individuals accepted Isaiah's warnings, the rejection was on a national scale. This is not predestination, or fate, or God miraculously closing their hearts.



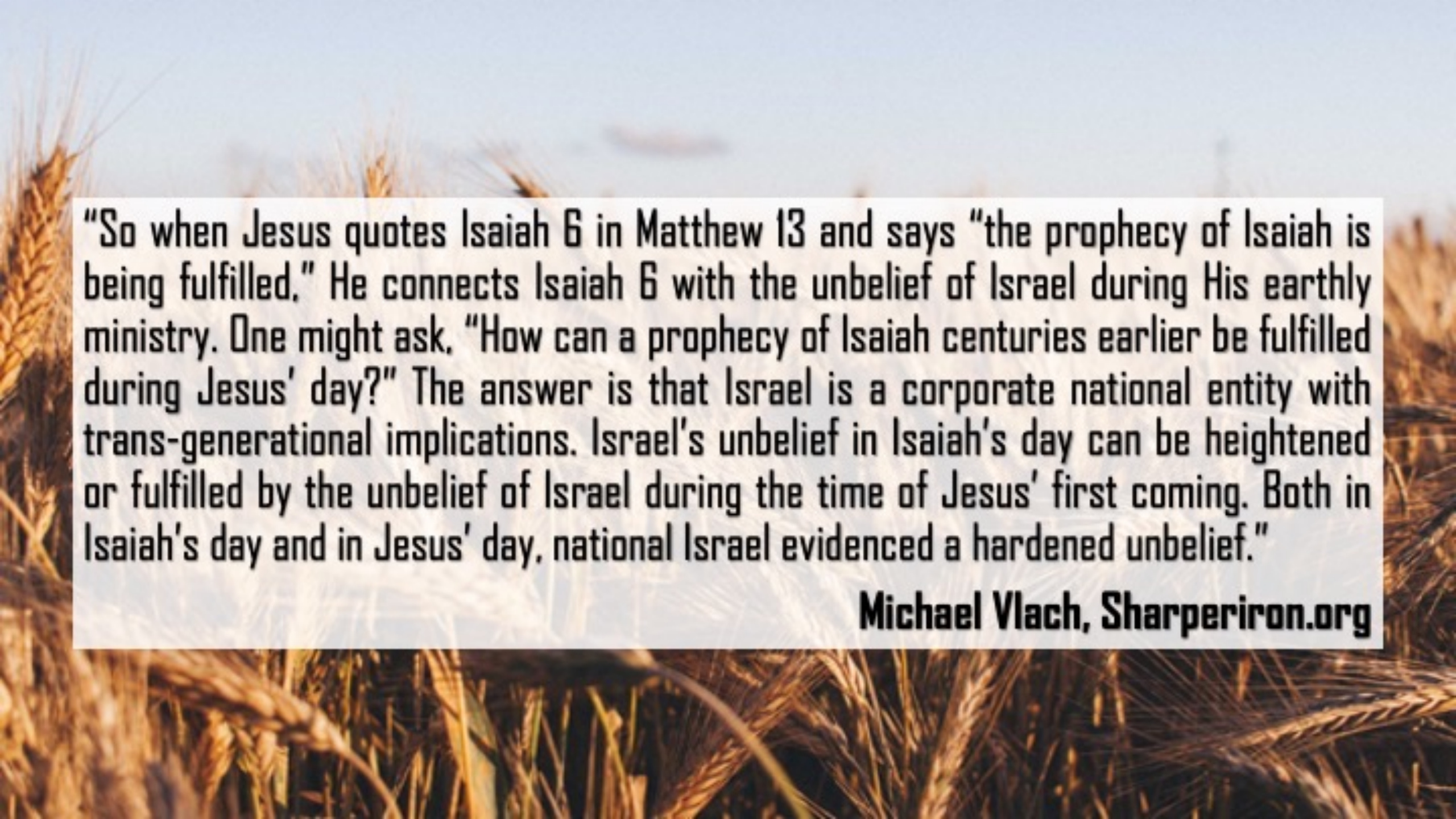
"When Isaiah was commissioned to undertake his prophetic ministry, he was warned in advance that the people to whom he was sent would pay no attention to him – that indeed all his words would be counter-productive and make them close their ears the more decisively. This would be the effect of the his ministry, but it was not its purpose (its purpose was that they might 'turn and be healed'); it is expressed, however, as though God were actually sending him in order that his hearers would not listen to him."

**F.F. Bruce, The Gospel And Epistles Of John**

# HEARING IT IN PARABLES

- Isaiah 6:9-10 is quoted once each by the synoptic gospel writers—Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10. In the context, Jesus has presented the parable of the sower and the seeds, but is later questioned by the disciples about His approach to teaching the multitudes through parables.
- The context is important. According to Matthew 3:2, 4:1, and 10:5-7 the nearness of the kingdom was being presented to Israel. Matthew 10:5-7 reveals that the kingdom message at this time was only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The cities of Israel were the focus here. Yet according to Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus rebuked the cities of Israel for their unbelief: "Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent" (Matt. 11:20). Like Isaiah, Jesus is facing a "general" rejection by Israel.





"So when Jesus quotes Isaiah 6 in Matthew 13 and says "the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled," He connects Isaiah 6 with the unbelief of Israel during His earthly ministry. One might ask, "How can a prophecy of Isaiah centuries earlier be fulfilled during Jesus' day?" The answer is that Israel is a corporate national entity with trans-generational implications. Israel's unbelief in Isaiah's day can be heightened or fulfilled by the unbelief of Israel during the time of Jesus' first coming. Both in Isaiah's day and in Jesus' day, national Israel evidenced a hardened unbelief."

**Michael Vlach, [Sharperiron.org](http://Sharperiron.org)**



Jesus used parables so frequently because He knew that a more direct tone would produce the same results as Isaiah. Eventually, Jesus does dispense with the parables and directly confronts His detractors and the corrupt leadership in Jerusalem (which, predictably, resulted in His crucifixion). But for now, in the middle portion of His ministry, He wanted to bring along potential disciples with language that certainly conveyed truth, but in a dose that wouldn't be immediately rejected. By veiling a convicting message in easy-to-digest parables, He is laying the groundwork for fruits that would be seen long after His earthly ministry was brought to a close.





## JOHN 12:37-43

- They "could not believe" – Why? The text idiomatically points to God as the cause of unbelief, but there are clearly other things going on here. Verse 43 gets to the root of the problem. It's not literally an inability to believe, as if it's beyond comprehension. Belief is impossible as long as we pursue things detrimental to it (lots of things become impossible due to self-inflicted constraints).
- "Many of the rulers believed..." – While some were willing to accept Jesus on some level, total commitment was just too "expensive."

## Isaiah 6

Israel's rejection  
prophesied

## Synoptics

Rejecting the  
Messianic ministry

## John 12

Rejecting the  
Messiah Himself

## Acts 28

The last recorded  
rejection by Israel







## SOME LESSONS I LEARN FROM THIS

- Each time this concept is presented, it shows that human stubbornness is the problem, not God. Israel's fate wasn't sealed because God made it certain – they were just so stubborn that He was certain of it!
- Sometimes the mission isn't successful in the way we define "success." Those with proper perspective would never say Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul were failures. Having the courage to walk in to a situation that others might deem "no-win" is part of the victory! Jeremiah (chapter 1) also faced a mission that the faithless would have deemed a dead-end.
- Watch out for the way "group think" clouds good judgment. No single person is a hopeless case or is predestined for wrath. But when we get caught up in a crowd of fools, villains, or the ignorant, the tidal push to perdition can be overwhelming (Prov. 13:20, Ex. 23:2, 1 Cor. 15:33).
- There is a time for parables, and a time to "drop the other shoe." Be wise in how you use both approaches.