

# Day 2

## Priorities and Who God Is

As important as success, security and significance are, there is something far more meaningful than these. Philosophers and theologians call it the *summum bonum*, the “supreme good,” and they tell us that to miss this is to miss everything. Read Revelation 1:8 and the note below to study the biblical vision of the *summum bonum*.

### Read Revelation 1:8

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Just as the Lord God calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty, so Jesus at the end of the Revelation says of Himself that He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and end (22:13).

Nothing and no one preceded the Lord, and nothing will follow Him. He is the supreme Author of matter and energy, of space and time. The infinite and personal I AM is the ultimate reality, and everything else is derived from Him.

If the utmost reality is a timeless, unchanging Person, then the *summum bonum*, the supreme good of humanity, is to know and be known by this Person. Scripture reveals that the Son of God has made it possible for us to enter into a genuine relationship with the Father (Matthew 11:27).

This is why it is possible for someone to attain the wildest fantasies of humanity and still lose everything in the end. What’s the point in receiving everything you’ve ever wanted, at the cost of losing your own soul (Matthew 16:26)? Our ultimate priority is to give our souls in exchange for the One who created them.

## Obedience to God

### **Genesis 6:22**

God's instructions must have seemed absurd, but Noah did exactly as he had been commanded. As leaders, our obedience to God must be unconditional. God asks us to trust Him even when we don't understand Him.

### **Genesis 22:1-18**

See Hebrews 11:17-19 for a commentary on this text that clarifies the nature of Abraham's radical obedience to God's command.

### **Leviticus 10:1-5**

This painful passage concerning Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu illustrates the truth that, to whom much is given, much will be required. When God pronounces His will, He demands complete obedience.

### **Deuteronomy 32:48-52**

This text delineates the long-term consequences of Moses' disobedience at Meribah. His act of striking the rock instead of speaking to it might seem comparatively trivial, but God has a higher standard for those He places in leadership positions.

### **Joshua 6:1-27**

The battle of Jericho was significant in that it was the most unorthodox of the battles of Joshua and that it was also the first. The apparently bizarre instructions that the people fully obeyed constituted a test of the new generation. The consequent collapse of the city wall demonstrated to the people that the Lord would fight – and win – their battles.

### **Joshua 7:1-26**

This incident graphically confirms the truth that God removes His power and blessing from those who disobey Him. The degree to which we tolerate known sin in our lives is the degree to which we separate ourselves from God's grace and favor.

### **Judges 1:27-2:3**

Israel's conquest of Canaan was incomplete; God's people disobeyed Him when they made covenants with the inhabitants of the land. Disobedience to God's revealed Word always causes regret in the long run.

### **1 Samuel 7:1-4**

Obedience is described in Scripture both in terms of attitudes and actions. In this case, the attitude of repentance had to be accompanied by the action of putting away foreign gods. God will not bless the good intentions of those who disobey Him.

**1 Samuel 9:15-10:1**

A true spiritual leader obeys God even when doing so is distasteful. Samuel was displeased with the people's pleas for a king since, in effect, they amounted to a rejection of God's rule through the judges (see 8:10-22). Samuel's obedience at this point illustrates why God was able to use him so effectively.

## ISAIAH

Isaiah (which means, “the Lord saves”) was the author of the longest prophetic book in the Hebrew Bible. He ministered after the time of Amos and Hosea and was a contemporary of Micah. Unlike Amos and Jeremiah who grew up in the country, Isaiah was evidently from Jerusalem. His extensive vocabulary and sophisticated style mark him as an intelligent and well-educated man. He also frequented the royal court in Jerusalem. Jewish tradition says that he was of royal blood; but regardless of whether or not this is the case, he certainly demonstrated an ability to handle himself with dignity in the court, where he communicated with clarity, eloquence and forcefulness.

When the Lord commissioned him as a prophet (Isaiah 6:1-13), Isaiah was overwhelmed by God’s holiness and his own sinful depravity. His exclamation (6:8) has served as a rallying cry for millions over the centuries and reveals this man’s commitment and unreserved willingness to serve God. Isaiah faithfully ministered for about sixty years (~740-680 B.C.) during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (1:1), and he eloquently warned these kings about the folly of making alliances with foreign powers rather than trusting in God for protection and deliverance.

But this man, who had the bearings of greatness, who was well-educated and well-connected, who ministered to kings and to the intelligentsia of his day, often found his ministry humbling. There’s no doubt that Isaiah had received what, even for a prophet, was a highly unusual and noble call to ministry. Yet at the beginning of his ministry, God prepared him for a future that would be marked by failure (6:9-13). His proclamations made him very unpopular with his royal audiences; according to tradition, this man of God met his end during the reign of the ungodly Manasseh, who ordered that he be sawed in two.

Leadership, even for those of high calling who have demonstrated impeccable preparation, may at times be accompanied by humble surroundings and low visibility. When searching for great leaders, we must not limit ourselves to executive suites and the latest leather-bound edition of *Who’s Who*. We’re unlikely to find the Isaiahs of the world there.