

Isaiah Lesson 01

Isaiah Chapter 1

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Introduction: Isaiah has been called the chief amongst the writing prophets. His prophecy is directed to the nation of Judah beginning about 760 B.C., more than 160 years prior to the Babylonian captivity. Through Isaiah, God pointedly warned Judah of impending judgment if they did not turn from their sin. Sadly, Judah for the most part ignored God's warning. The book of Isaiah is unique in that it has more of the testimony of Jehovah God than any other book of the writing prophets.

Isaiah is clearly the prophet of redemption. There is no other place in the Old Testament where the suffering Messiah is set forth as clearly as here. Isaiah reveals the person, offices, grace, and kingdom of Christ; of His incarnation and birth of a virgin; of His sufferings and death; and the glory that should follow.

Our Lord preached His first sermon at Nazareth out of this book, (Luke 4:17-21) and it was in this the eunuch was reading when Philip came up to him, who from the same Scripture preached to him Christ, Acts 8:28-35. There are more citations in the New Testament made from this prophecy than any other book, with the exception of the book of Psalms."

The book also includes pointed warning of coming judgment against neighboring nations of that day. However, the greater message is directed to Judah (Israel). Isaiah clearly warns of the impending Babylonian captivity as well as foretelling the return therefrom. The humiliation and suffering of the Messiah is set forth more clearly here than anywhere (with the possible exception of Psalm 22.) The book also presents a more comprehensive picture of Christ in His kingdom than any other book of the entire Bible.

The book has essentially two divisions:

- (1) looking toward the captivities (chapters 1-39).
- (2) looking beyond the captivities (chapters 40-66).

I. Vision of Isaiah

Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

The chapter begins immediately and pointedly with God's charges against Judah. The focus then shifts to the first of many exhortations by God through the prophet to His backslidden people. Near the end of the chapter, God promises to turn away His wrath if Judah will turn from its sin. The prophecy of Isaiah commences, noting the era in which it was presented.

The book begins with several introductory notes. (1) The book is noted as a vision which is used in the prophetic sense. Clearly implied is that the prophecy of Isaiah came from God. Isaiah briefly notes the name of his father Amoz. Little else is known of his personal background.

The focus of the prophecy is "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" and therefore the southern kingdom. The time of Isaiah's writing ministry was "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." That time span approximates eighty-five years.

Isa 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

Isa 1:3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Isa 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Isaiah wastes no time in launching into the message from God to Judah. The source of the prophet's message is clear: "the LORD hath spoken." God's message was I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The children, of course, were the house of Judah and to a greater extent, Israel. God had nurtured them as a nation and blessed them in every conceivable way. Yet, they had turned their backs upon their God.

God through the prophet used the following illustration. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Even a beast such as an ox or a donkey knows its own master. But Israel was willingly oblivious to their God, neither did they care.

In verse 4, the prophet addresses his people. Isaiah uses three illustrations to describe his sinful nation.

- (1) They were a people carrying great iniquity.
- (2) They were a generation of evildoers.
- (3) They were corrupt.

The prophet further characterizes his people. They had forsaken Jehovah their God. They accordingly had provoked God to anger. They had backslidden from their God. "gone away backward." Noteworthy is the phrase, "the Holy One of Israel." Apart from two references to this title in the Psalms, Isaiah is the primary source thereof. Of the 30 times it appears in Scripture, 27 of them are found in Isaiah. (Jeremiah uses the phrase once.) Indeed, Jehovah God is the Holy One of Israel. He is holy altogether.

Isa 1:5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

Isa 1:6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

The prophet asked his people, Why should ye be stricken any more? God had already been chastening His people because of their sin. Judah had been defeated in a war with Israel. II Chronicles 28:19 notes that God had brought them low because of the sins of Ahaz their king. Nevertheless, Judah continued to rebel against her God. The prophet uses the analogy of physical sickness to describe his nation. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." The nation was full of spiritual cancer from its head to its feet. They had long rebelled against their God.

II. Israel Was A Desolate Country

Isa 1:7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

Isa 1:8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

Lest there be any question to the application of his analogy, Isaiah continued, "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." Judah was in deplorable condition and Isaiah makes it very clear it was because of God's chastening against them for their sin. With eloquent metaphor, the prophet continues, "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city." Though the metaphor sounds quaint and rustic, that is not the intent.

A “cottage in a vineyard” was a shack used for shelter to watch against animals and thieves coming to steal grapes. A “lodge in a garden of cucumbers” was a hut in which the gardener could hide to guard against thieves. The final analogy is even more pungent. A “besieged city” was a city on the brink of starvation.

Though Jerusalem had not yet faced such dire circumstances, the prewarning is clearly made. Judah was already facing hard times because of their sin resulting in God’s chastening and it would become vastly worse. The once mighty and proud nation of David and Solomon was now on the brink of poverty and would face the specter of invasion, siege, and eventual defeat. The warning of God was at hand.

Isa 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

The prophet proclaimed, “Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” The Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom had not yet taken place. Yet, with prophetic prescience, Isaiah warned that unless “the LORD of hosts” spared some of the people for His own names sake, Israel would be destroyed. The very small remnant foretold is none other than Judah after the northern ten tribes were deported by the Assyrians. Judah (and Benjamin) would be a remnant of what once had been the mighty nation of Israel. It was only by the mercy of God that they did not wind up as Sodom and Gomorrah.

The metaphor is not by coincidence. The prophet clearly implied that spiritual conditions in Judah were not greatly different than they had been in those 2 infamous cities that were destroyed. Therefore, the prophet thundered, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. “ Isaiah was referring to the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. He likened them to the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In so doing, he called upon the backslidden leadership of Judah to hear the spoken word of the Lord through the prophets and pay heed to the written Word of God which they already possessed. It would serve us well to heed the counsel of the prophet.

III. God Wanted Obedience, not Sacrifice

Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I

delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Isa 1:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

Though Judah still nominally worshiped Jehovah God, it was not from their heart. They ignored the weightier matters of the Law. They only went through the motions of prescribed Levitical sacrifice making a mockery of Gods promise of redemption. God made it known thru His prophet that He was tired of their empty sacrifices. He was weary with all their hypocritical animal sacrifices. Their heart was far from him.

As the prophet would cry out in 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." The Lord asked, "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" The question is rhetorical. God had required it in the Law of Moses. Yet, Judah made a mockery thereof by their hypocritical observance and heartless ritual.

Isa 1:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Isa 1:14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Because of the hypocrisy of Judah, God ordered them to stop their pretense of worship. Judah was openly indulging in idolatry in various places within the Kingdom. During the reign of Ahaz, the king had even set up pagan altars in the very courts of the Temple. See II Kings 16:10-18.

2Ki 16:10 And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

2Ki 16:11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

2Ki 16:12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

2Ki 16:13 And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar.

2Ki 16:14 And he brought also the brasen altar, which was before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

2Ki 16:15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

2Ki 16:16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

2Ki 16:17 And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

2Ki 16:18 And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

The nation failed to heed Gods warning and hypocritically continued to go through the motions of worship of Jehovah. God cried out, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. Because idolatry permeated the entire nation, God was disgusted with the national convocations when Judah came to hypocritically give lip service to their true God. God warned them, "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

When Judah finally would try to pray to God, He announced that He would not pay any attention to them.

(1) Judah had tolerated the murder of Zechariah by Joash
II Chronicles 24:20-22.

(2) They had participated in the abomination of Molech with their small children II
kings 16:3.

2Ki 16:3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

They had tolerated bloodshed in their land. God had enough. He warned, He would no longer listen to their prayer when they prayed.

Isa 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Isa 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

God implored Judah to get right with Him. He gave them ample opportunity to cleanse themselves from their sin. He was not interested in ceremonial cleansing. He besought them to turn away from their sin. Furthermore, God instructed them to learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless and plead for the widow.

In short, God pled with His people to return to righteousness. That included doing good, doing justly, helping those in need, and watching over those in distress. Clearly implied is that all the above had disappeared from Judah.

IV. God Asks for His People To Reason With Him

Isa 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isa 1:19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

Isa 1:20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

God invited His people to come and consider His gracious offer. Though their sin was as scarlet, indicating the depth and perversity thereof, He was willing to cleanse and pardon them. Moreover, when God cleanses our sin, though it be red like crimson, He makes us as whiter than snow. See Revelation 1:18.

Rev 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Psa 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

There is no white more dazzling than newly-fallen, fresh snow. It is a white which makes any other white seem dull and yellow by comparison. God offered a

complete cleansing to Judah if they would repent. That cleansing comes from the precious blood of Christ. See also I John 1:7 and Revelation 1:5.

God presented to Judah the clear condition for such cleansing. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." The principle was of a willing heart. That bespeaks a repentant heart. From a repentant heart flows obedience to God. The greater thought is that as Judah was willing to return to her God in repentance and become obedient to His Word, He promised that He would again bless them in their land.

The big word is found in "if". If they would be willing to return to their God in complete obedience, He would bless them. However, He warned, "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

If Judah refused to return to her God and continued to rebel, harsh judgment was coming. The day was at hand when first the Assyrians would invade their land and then the Babylonians would utterly defeat them and carry them away captive for their sin. God had given them clear options. Repent, return, obey and be blessed. Or, refuse, rebel, and disobey and be devoured. God signed his offer with the oath of His own word, for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Isa 1:21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

Isa 1:22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

Isa 1:23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

The Lord through the prophet now shifts to a plaintive lament of the spiritual condition of Jerusalem. God uses the analogy of marriage and a faithful wife eventually becoming an adulteress. Jerusalem had become just that to her God. Whereas once Jerusalem and Judah had been a haven for justice and righteousness, it now was a city of murderers. Jesus, seven-hundred years later, would indict Jerusalem for her murder of the prophets. See Matthew 23:37.

Mat 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

The glory of Jerusalem had been transformed into corruption. The analogy of silver becoming dross refers to the slag of the refining process. They had substituted the slag of sin for the silvery glory of righteousness. Their fine Jewish (non-alcoholic) wine had become watery. The analogy was how Judah had

substituted that which was of great value for that which was worthless. The corruption and crookedness of the leadership of Judah is condemned. They not only were dishonest, but they willingly received bribes. They were hard-hearted towards those in need and had no concern for them.

V. God Promises to Avenge His Enemies

Isa 1:24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

Isa 1:25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

Notice the threefold description God gives of Himself: (1) the Lord, (2) the LORD of hosts, and (3) the mighty One of Israel. There certainly is a triune reference to His person and perhaps a hint of the Trinity therein. God would take comfort of His adversaries and be avenged of His enemies.

Precisely who the enemies and adversaries are is not clear. However, the preceding context would imply those in Judah who had so rebelled against their God. If that be the case, judgment is implied here. This thought is reenforced as the Lord warns, “ And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.”

Isa 1:26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Isa 1:27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

Whereas God had warned of impending judgment, now the tone is of restoration after the judgment. Though God would chasten His people, He would use it to restore them to righteousness thereafter. After having allowed Jerusalem to be severely chastised for her sin, God would someday restore the leadership of the nation in righteousness as it originally had been.

In that day, Jerusalem will again be called “the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy still awaits. Though God did allow the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah, and though there were glimmers of revival in those years, the full realization of righteousness and faithfulness in Jerusalem will not take place until the King of Righteousness rules and reigns there.

In that day, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. Zion, of course, is a metaphor of Jerusalem. Though Jews returned to Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah and again in the twentieth century, the full stature of judgment and righteousness remains to be fulfilled. Again, this will not be accomplished until Jesus Christ the righteous sits upon His throne in Jerusalem.

Isa 1:28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

Isa 1:29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

Having received a beam of encouraging light from the heavens, the dark clouds of warning return. God warned how that the sinners in the land would be destroyed along with those who forsook the Lord. God would prove to them that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The oaks they desired and the gardens they chose undoubtedly refer to idolatry on every high hill and under every green tree. See II Kings 16:4, 17:10, and II Chronicles 28:4. This references King Ahaz in 2 Chronicles.

2Ch 28:4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

When God’s judgment finally came, many would be ashamed of their idolatrous practices.

Isa 1:30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

Isa 1:31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

The chapter concludes with the ominous warning, “An oak whose leaf fades is a dying tree as is a garden with no water”. The prophet warned how the rulers of Judah would become as tow or flax which has no strength. Tow was used for wicks in candles.

Isaiah warns how that the Maker thereof (Jehovah God) would soon burn them together and no one would be able to extinguish the fire of His wrath. The wrath of God’s judgment against backslidden Judah is set forth. Though God would eventually restore them in the Day of the Lord, His chastening judgment was at hand. God’s warning against His people will continue in the next chapter.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.