

“THE DIAGNOSIS”

“They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.” —ISAIAH 1:4

Isaiah, in his opening chapter, gives a diagnosis of a problem with the nation of Israel, specifically Judah, which is recurring throughout the history of Israel, and is as relevant today for all of us who form the Church of Jesus Christ.

The diagnosis begins in verse 3, where Isaiah says, “The ox knows its master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” Out of familiarity, an ox knows its master and a donkey his owner’s manger, but the people of Judah have neglected God. They are no longer familiar with Him, and that neglect of God has turned to a position of rejecting God – “They turned their backs on Him.” Dependent upon themselves, they had spurned the Holy One of Israel and gone their own way.

God seeks active relationships, and whether it’s Israel or the church of Jesus Christ, the same principle applies. We don’t just have a relationship where we can say, “We are the people of God”. Every Israelite could say that. There needs to be fellowship with God, and a sense of living out of a relationship with Him that is real and vital.

God did not select us simply to have another person He can use in this world, but so that He may bring us to Himself. God said to Moses, “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” (Exodus 19:4).

The ultimate purpose in God bringing His people into Canaan was not so they could feast off a land flowing with milk and honey, but so that He could bring them into relationship with Him. In Exodus 19:5-6, God said of Israel, “Out of all nations you are my treasured possession. You will be for me a Holy nation.”

It is the same with the church of Jesus Christ. We are set apart for Christ, a holy church to not only be workers with Him, but to be in intimate fellowship with Him. In the busyness of our everyday lives, we can allow many things to creep in that lure us away from Christ. Not only do we end up neglecting Him, but like the Israelites, that often leads to rejecting Him. Isaiah’s diagnosis of a broken people is their broken relationship with God. As Christians, we need to realize that God brings us to Himself in order that we may experience His love and reciprocate it. It’s meant to be a personal, living, day by day relationship, in which we make Jesus our closest friend.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, You are many things to me; my guide, my teacher, my comforter, my refuge, my Saviour and my closest friend. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I nurturing a relationship with Christ that makes Him my friend?