

# The Book of Isaiah

## Chapter One

**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. (Isaiah 1:1)**

We have noted in our outline of the book of Isaiah the focus of each chapter, whether it is the southern tribes collectively known as Israel or the Gentile nations, the underlining focus is always Jerusalem and Judah. This is due to the fact Judah and Jerusalem have everything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. Judah the tribe from whence Christ comes (Rev. 5:5) and Jerusalem the place He will reside and rule (Isaiah 24:23).

The historical setting is during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Uzziah 2 Kings 15:1-5; 2 Chron. 26:1-23

Jotham, 2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chron. 27:1-9

Ahaz, 2 Kings 16:1-20; 2 Chron. 28:1-27

Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:1-20:21

Manasseh, 2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chron. 33:1-20

It is therefore good, and imperative that we take the advice of Martin Luther:

*“Let all those who desire to read and understand the prophet Isaiah profitably not despise – unless they know something better – my advice and council: Do not overlook the title or the beginning of the book but think about it for a while until you understand it well, for the title of this prophecy is like a marginal note and light that illuminates the entire book. By this I do not mean that you should read the names of the kings correctly, but that you take and read the second book of the Kings and of the Chronicles, especially that which was said and took place during the reign of these kings.”*

Every person who desires the study especially the first part of Isaiah will be wise to follow this good advice of the Reformer, for many of Isaiah’s statements have indubitably a historical background. Even though his eye was fixed on the faraway day of the coming of the Lord nevertheless, the words which he spoke on behalf of the Lord are often rooted in the events of his own day.

*\*See Appendix A and B.*

### **An Unsuccessful Upbringing (2-4):**

**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. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 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 1:2-4)**

**(vs.1)** The LORD is calling heaven and earth to bear witness to the fact that what is detailed in this chapter concerning Judah and Jerusalem is entirely true. This invoking of heaven and earth is done by Moses at the beginning of his song (Deut. 32:1). As here Moses describes Israel's sins of the past, present, and future. Thus, the LORD is looking at the children of Israel as a whole, who He "nourished and brought up" since their birth out of Egypt. The heaven and earth are to bear witness that God did for the children of Israel all He could do. The children are to blame.

**(vs. 3)** The stern rebuke to Israel, the people of God, is the ox knows its owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know! Even the basest of animals know the one that cares for their basic needs. The ass is considered to be the dumbest and most stubborn of animals and yet it knows who provides for it. My dog Molly knows I am the one that cares for her, I feed her on a regular basis, so she knows to come to me when hungry or thirsty. She knows I am the one who provides a warm comfortable place to sleep so she knows to come to the door and wait for me to open it. But Israel does not even consider the God who has "nourished and brought them up" (2).

**(vs. 4)** The children of Israel have turned away from the God who continually has provided and cared for them. And worst yet, they have turned away from Him unto their own evil sins of iniquity. And in turning to sins of iniquity they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger. Thus, throughout Isaiah you will see mentioned that God has not turned away from His anger, His arm of judgement is stretched out still (Isa. 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4) until the time of His anger is turned away (Isa. 12.)

The reins of the Law of the Lord, made powerless by the will of the flesh, did not keep Israel from unbridled sin and iniquity.

*By bit and bridle, guided by man's skillful hand,  
Are kept in check the beasts that do not understand.*

## The Rod of Correction Refused (5-9):

**Why should ye be stricken anymore? ye will revolt more and more: 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. 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. 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. 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. (Isaiah 1:5-9)**

(5a) When the rebellious son does not receive the loving chastisement from the Father, the son becomes hardened, stiffening his neck and hardens his heart. Thus, the chastisement no longer softens them but hardens them just as Pharaoh allowed his own stubbornness to harden his heart. (See Jeremiah 2:30 cf. Jer. 5:3 cf. Ex. 7:13,14)

(5b-6) The whole of the nation is a deplorable state. The land is likened to a man that is riddled with diseases. This is similar to the state of sinful man that Paul points out when he is proving all have sinned (Romans 3:10 - 18.)

This very descriptive state of the nation, “stricken” “wounds” and “bruises” they deserved. However, Christ who did not deserve to be stricken, to be wounded or bruises would do so for us all!

**Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)**

(7) After describing the deplorable state of the nation, the LORD describes the desolate state of their country. The strangers, the enemies of God burn their cities and literally serve themselves of the land and its resources.

(8) The expression, “daughter of Zion” is a poetic reference to towns or villages surrounding a city. The idea often used in eastern culture is a city was the mother and all the outcroppings of towns or villages were the daughters<sup>1</sup>. “Daughter of Zion” can also, metaphorically refer to the people of Zion (given the context). Thus, **daughter of**

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<sup>1</sup> Metropolis: late Middle English: via late Latin from Greek *mētropolis* ‘mother state’, from *mētēr*, *mētr-* ‘mother’ + *polis* ‘city’.

**Zion** is a poetic personification of the city Jerusalem, and by extension is a metaphor for the House of Israel. Thus, you have the “Daughter of Babylon” and the “daughters of the Chaldeans” (Isa. 47:1), the “daughter of Tyre” (Psalm 45:12), the “daughter of Egypt” (Jer. 46:11, 24) and the “daughter of Edom (Lam. 4:21).

The towns and villages surrounding Zion are left as a cottage in a vineyard and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

The cottage in a vineyard was a shanty or shack used by the watchman to guard the vineyard from animals and robbers. The lodge in a garden of cucumbers was a hut used to provide temporary shelter for the gardener.

(9) The LORD always has a remnant. All throughout the book of Isaiah a remnant is mentioned and usually proceed verses about God’s judgment. Throughout Isaiah’s ministry there will be remnant spared. There is a remnant spared from the Assyrian army led by Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:32-36). Then there is a remnant spared in Babylon following the destruction of Jerusalem. Today there is a remnant according to grace (Rom. 11:5). And their will be remnant saved from the coming antichrist (Isa. 10:21-23).

#### **An Empty Religion (10-15):**

**Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 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. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 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. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear 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. (Isaiah 1:10-15)**

(10) What a rebuke to God’s people. They are likened to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Read Isa. 3:8-9; Jer. 23:10-14; Rev. 11:8).

The people of God would not “hear” the LORD nor “give ear” to the law of God. They had grown hard of hearing (Read Isa. 6:9-10 cf. Matt. 13:15; cf. Acts 28:27); thus, you have in Revelation chapters 2 & 3 “**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**”.

**(11-14)** The nation had become a religious people with a heart far removed from the LORD. They had become that vain religious nation thereby making all the moral, ceremonial and sacrificial laws nothing but a vain, empty religious system: **Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you (Isa. 29:13), saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:7-9)**

The people had corrupted the sacrifices (11-12), the oblations (offerings 13) and ceremonies (feasts 14). The prophet Amos who was prophesying at the same time as Isaiah speaks of the nation's corruptness at this time as well: **"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts."** (Amos 5:21-22)

**Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 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. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 1:16-20)**

**A Call to Cleanliness (16-20):** As is seen by the first 4 verses of this chapter, the nation had become a "sinful nation a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers" (4). Their hands were full of blood through their many sacrifices for sin, but their heart was not right with God (15). Therefore, the call of the prophets is a call for cleanliness.

Prior to the nation being placed into the land, a washing must first take place to cleanse the people of their sin. According to the Law the priests had to wash themselves before they could perform the office of the priesthood lest they die (Ex. 30:19-21). This washing made them clean and fit to perform their duties as priests to the people. The nation had become filthy from joining itself to all the abominations of the heathen. So, in verse 16 we see a hinting of the washing for the cleansing that had to take place prior to the nation being that holy nation and kingdom of priests. This is also spoken of in Ezekiel 36:25 - 29 and other places throughout the prophets. As the establishment of the Kingdom begins to be "at hand" John offered to the nation a prescription for cleansing in accordance with Isaiah 1:16 and Ezek. 36:25. John offered a cleansing for their

personal sins (Matthew 3:6) for their personal unrighteousness before God. Pharisees therefore did not get baptized of John the Baptist because they saw themselves as righteous before God not needing to repent of sins (Luke 7:29,30). The individuals who made up the nation have willingly become a sinful nation before God and have received "double for her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-3) and in Isaiah 1:1-15 you have a vivid description of the place Israel had become in the sight of God and as such they need to, as verse 16 of Isaiah says: "wash you make you clean put away your doings from before mine eyes.." This is the way in which they needed to repent of their sins and be "cleansed".

**(18)** The call to cleansing is for God's people. The nation of Israel knew what the LORD required, thus "come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD". The multitude that heard John the Baptist preach baptism for repentance were not surprised that he baptized his hearers, as though something wholly new and unexpected was now taking place. They were only surprised that John did the baptizing since he was not the Christ (John 1:25). They had expected a widespread baptism in connection with the coming of the Messiah (Ezek. 36:25).

**(19-20)** If the people responded positively to the call to cleanse their ways, then they would be blessed. This is the do and don't of being dealt with by law in accordance with Deut. 28.

**How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: 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. (Isaiah 1:21-23)**

**Unjust Measures (21-22):** Israel had become a unjust nation in all its dealings, there commerce with one another was corrupt. This was warned against in the Law (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1).

**Unjust Judges (23):** The Lord made it abundantly clear in the Law that rulers were never to take bribes (Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19). Such is the case of all lobbyists.

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: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 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. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 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. (Isaiah 1:24-31)

**Removal of Apostate Element (24-31):** What follow in these verses is how God will remove the apostate element within the nation. God by His fiery judgment will purge out the apostate element and cleans the land. Just as John the Baptist warned the Pharisees to flee from the wrath to come (see Matt. 3:10-12). Within these verses is the when and how of that time.

**(25, 28-31)** The enemy within. The very leadership of the nation is corrupt and by the Gospels things will have only gotten worse. This is what our Lord was dealing with in Matt. 13:30 when mentioning wheat among the tares. This however has a broader scope to the tares within the land of Israel as whole being the confederacy of the nations headed up by the antichrist (Psalm 83).

Both groups will be dealt with prior to the establishment of the Kingdom. First the Lord upon His return will send forth His angels and gather all the tares and cast them into the Lake of Fire (Matt. 13:36-41). Then once the Lord sits on the throne of His power He will judge the goat nations, removing the apostate and rebellious nations from among the land of Israel. (Isaiah 1:28-31; Matt. 25:31-46).

**(26)** Once the apostate element is dealt with the Lord will restore His judges among the nations. This is a reference to how the Lord will organize His governmental leadership within His kingdom. The Lord will establish one head from each of the 12 tribes of Israel and these in turn would judge the nation (Matt. 19:28). They will put forth the righteous judgments from the Lord who will sit on His throne administering righteousness throughout the world (Matt. 19:28).

**(27)** It is at this time that Jerusalem will be called "city of righteousness, the faithful city"

