

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Introduction

When you hear the words, “*Old Testament prophecy*” is the first thought that comes to your mind, “*Oh, brother, dullsville*”? You wonder what on earth all that ancient stuff has to do with tomorrow morning’s news or with the problems you’re facing today.

Well maybe the people in Old Testament times dressed differently from us and maybe their occupations were a bit different, but underneath that they were human beings just like you and me. They struggled with problems and relationships and with concerns about taxes and oppression and wars and the meaning of life, just as you and I do. Furthermore, God spoke to them in some rather clear ways, and His message to them cut to the heart of the important things in life. His message to us through them also cuts to the heart of matters today. In fact, we think you will find it an eye-opening experience to go through the book of Isaiah.

For those who are not familiar with Old Testament prophecy, I would like to suggest that you sit back and keep an open mind through the first dozen chapters or so of the book of Isaiah. If you’ll do so, we’re confident that you will learn a great deal, much of which may make you feel uncomfortable at first. But if you stay with it you’ll find this book to be an experience you will truly treasure throughout your life. The God of the Bible is a God of love, but He is also a God that cannot tolerate sin in any way, shape, or form. That is why He provides all of His creation a way of being forgiven for sin and thereby eternal life with Him in Heaven forever.

But the God of the Bible also makes it quite clear that those who ignore and refuse His forgiveness will be given exactly what they want, separation from God for eternity. That separation is what is known as Hell, and from every description the Bible gives us it will be so horrible that no one will have even a moment’s relief from torment for all of eternity. So if by chance you don’t know the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ, I beg you to learn about Him so that you don’t experience this horrible end.

One other thing that will be helpful to understand is that around the year 2100 BC, God called a man by the name of Abraham to found the nation of Israel. God did this so that He could reveal Himself to a people of one nation and commission and train that nation to carry the truth about God to the rest of the world. The nation was Israel and the people of Israel were called Jews. Now you may think that it is a waste of time to study events that occurred from 2100 BC to the time of the last Old Testament book around 400 BC. You would be wrong.

The Word of God given to Abraham and all the authors of the Old Testament is as applicable today as it was in 2100 BC. God does not change, whether we’re discussing yesterday, today, or tomorrow. These were instructions for living life according to the way God created us to live. To obey would bring peace and joy. To disobey would bring

anxiety, fear, and unhappiness. If you'll give the Bible a chance, you'll see that people in Israel during the twenty-first century BC aren't all that different from people in Chicago in the twenty-first century AD.

What was good for the people then is good for people now. What was wrong for people then is also wrong for people today. You'll also see that the fate of Israel could very likely be duplicated in the United States for the very same reason.

You are also about to see prophecies that look forward not only a few hundred years from the time Isaiah wrote this book, but also right on through to the end of this present age when Jesus returns in glory, which is at some unknown time in the future.

Let's set the stage a little bit. After the reign of King David in 970 BC, his son Solomon became king, but Solomon, though very wise and obedient to God in some ways, was disobedient in marrying many wives from other countries. These wives brought their idol worship (false gods) with them. So it only follows that their children would also be exposed to idol worship as much or more as to the worship of the true God. So after Solomon's death, his son, Rehoboam (circa 930 BC), took over what was to become Judah, the southern kingdom, and one of Solomon's officers, Jeroboam, became king of the northern kingdom, often called Israel. From that point on, there was frequent bad blood between the two kingdoms, even though there were also periods where the two kingdoms got along with each other OK. Idolatry was rampant in both kingdoms. However, from time to time, there would be a godly king in either the north or the south. These godly kings tried to restore worship of the one true God and endeavored to be obedient to the Lord. Judah was the kingdom who had the largest percentage of godly kings. You've undoubtedly heard of the wicked Queen Jezebel. Well, her husband, King Ahab, ruled the northern kingdom about eighty years or so before Isaiah came on the scene. Isaiah's ministry began when King Uzziah died (740 BC). Isaiah ministered primarily in the southern kingdom. King Uzziah was a very effective ruler. The land of Judah was enjoying great economic prosperity and for the first part of his rule, he very much trusted and served God. Uzziah has been considered the most outstanding king of Judah since David and Solomon. However, at one point Uzziah made a serious mistake and disobeyed God by taking on priestly duties. When the high priest confronted him about it, he got very angry and defied the priest. God brought punishment on him for that and things in the kingdom began to deteriorate (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-23). Enter the prophet Isaiah.

Chapter 1

A WAKE-UP CALL

Isaiah 1:1-31 (NLT):

1 These visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah son of Amoz during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—all kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the Lord says: “The children I raised and cared for have turned against me.

3 Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand.”

4 Oh, what a sinful nation they are! They are loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil and corrupt children who have turned away from the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel, cutting themselves off from his help.

5 Why do you continue to invite punishment? Must you rebel forever? Your head is injured, and your heart is sick.

6 You are sick from head to foot—covered with bruises, welts, and infected wounds—without any ointments or bandages.

7 Your country lies in ruins, and your cities are burned. As you watch, foreigners plunder your fields and destroy everything they see.

8 Jerusalem stands abandoned like a watchman’s shelter in a vineyard or field after the harvest is over. It is as helpless as a city under siege.

9 IF THE LORD ALMIGHTY HAD NOT SPARED A FEW OF US, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT AS COMPLETELY AS SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

10 Listen to the Lord, you leaders of Israel! Listen to the law of our God, people You act just like the rulers and people of Sodom and Gomorrah. of Israel.

11 “I am sick of your sacrifices,” says the Lord. “Don’t bring me any more burnt offerings! I don’t want the fat from your rams or other animals. I don’t want to see the blood from your offerings of bulls and rams and goats.

12 Why do you keep parading through my courts with your worthless sacrifices?

13 The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils! Your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath day, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I want nothing more to do with them.

14 I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them!

15 From now on, when you lift up your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen. For your hands are covered with the blood of your innocent victims.

16 Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways.

17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan.

Fight for the rights of widows.

18 “Come now, let us argue this out,” says the Lord. “No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool.

19 If you will only obey me and let me help you, then you will have plenty to eat.

20 But if you keep turning away and refusing to listen, you will be destroyed by your enemies. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

21 See how Jerusalem, once so faithful, has become a prostitute. Once the home of justice and righteousness, she is now filled with murderers.

22 Once like pure silver, you have become like worthless slag. Once so pure, you are now like watered-down wine.

23 Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows.

24 Therefore, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, says, “I will pour out my fury on you, my enemies!

25 I will turn against you.

TURNING POINT

I will melt you down and skim off your slag. I will remove all your impurities. (SUGGESTIVE OF THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED DURING THE TRIBULATION)¹

26 Afterward I will give you good judges and wise counselors like the ones you used to have. Then Jerusalem will again be called the Home of Justice and the Faithful City.”

27 Because the Lord is just and righteous, the repentant people of Jerusalem will be redeemed.

28 But all sinners will be completely destroyed, for they refuse to come to the Lord.

29 Shame will cover you when you think of the times you offered sacrifices to idols in your groves of sacred oaks. You will blush when you think of all the sins you committed in your sacred gardens.

30 You will wither away like an oak or garden without water.

31 The strongest among you will disappear like burning straw. Your evil deeds are the spark that will set the straw on fire, and no one will be able to put it out. (IN OTHER WORDS THEY HAVE NO ONE TO BLAME BUT THEMSELVES)²

What an impressive contrast! We see the degree of sin and the judgment it requires. Yet we also see a wonderful promise that God will get rid of all the evil and that right will again prevail. Now, let's take a closer look.

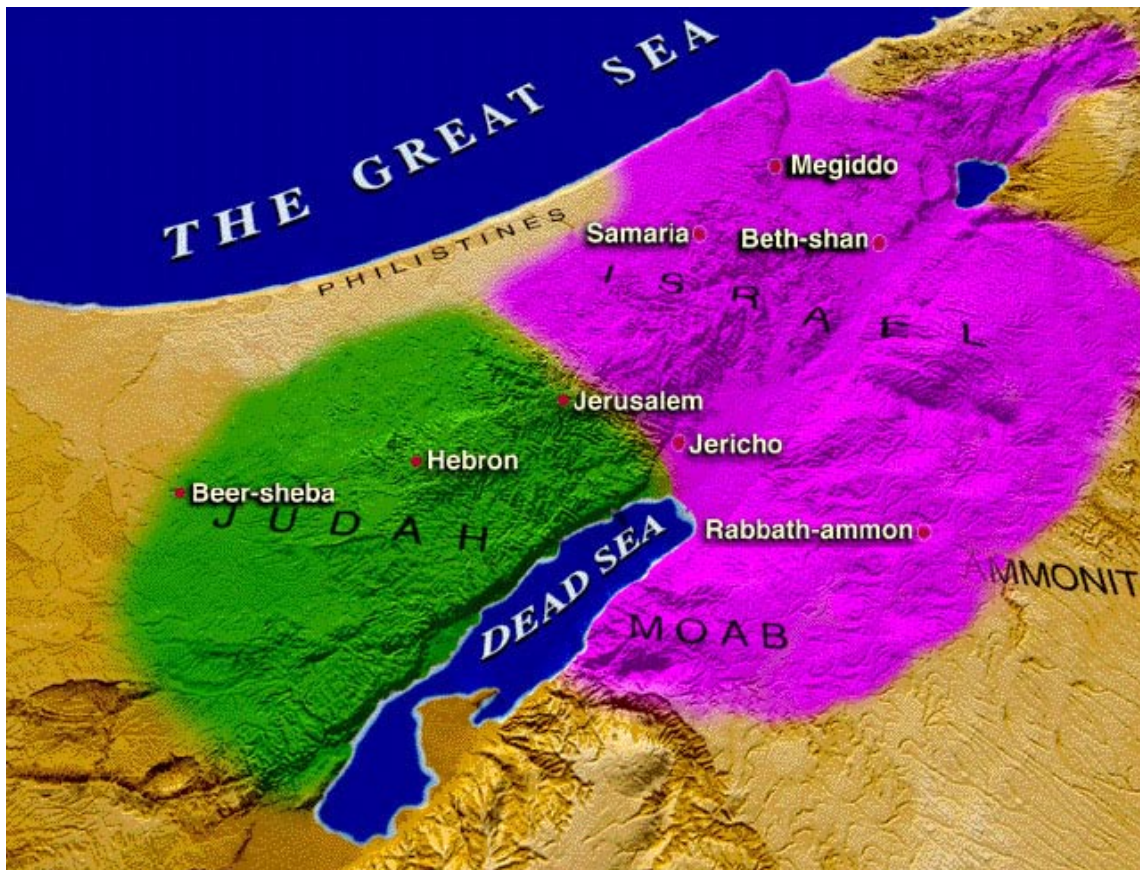
Isaiah 1:1 (NRSV):

¹ Parentheses added.

² Parenthesis added.

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

We're told upfront that this is a book of prophecy. Prophecy can be defined as a "*miracle of knowledge of something in the future beyond the power of human ability to foresee.*"³ This is a vision of an 8th-century prophet by the name of **Isaiah ben Amoz** (765 B.C. - 695 B.C.). Isaiah lived in the city of Jerusalem, which was in the southern kingdom of Judah. Israel had been divided after the reign of Solomon into the northern kingdom of **Israel** and the southern kingdom of **Judah**. **AS A VISION** Isaiah's words go beyond the period of time during which he lived. In fact they go all the way to our present day and right on through to the very end of this world when Christ will return. From his position of some influence in the royal court he witnessed a number of devastating **invasions by the Assyrians**. Invasions which resulted in the destruction of most of the major cities of the region, including **Samaria**, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (722 BC).



Israel and Judah, 734 B.C.

All the fortified cities of Judah were the last to fall to **Sennacherib** and Jerusalem itself just barely survived the siege of **701 B.C.**

³ Easton, M. 1996, c1897. Easton's Bible dictionary. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

Isaiah's name in Hebrew, *Yasha'yahu* means "*the Lord Yahweh saves.*" When the prophet refers to the *city of Zion* or *daughters of Zion*, he is referring to "*Jerusalem.*" The book of Isaiah lays the foundation for Jewish and Christian beliefs about "*Jerusalem*" and the "*New Jerusalem*" where Christ will reign during the **Millennium** (a period of 1,000 years) after His return.

Isaiah 1:2:

*2 Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but **they have rebelled against me.**"*

Right from the get-go Isaiah makes it clear that these are the words of the Lord summoning heaven and earth as witnesses to hear the charges against Israel. He sets the stage by likening God the Father to an earthly parent who poured everything into bringing his children up right. But the kids rebelled against the good things they have been taught.

Isaiah 1:3:

3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

Even dumb animals have more sense than Israel because they are able to recognize their master. But the people of Judah have ignored their own **Father**. Isaiah then addresses the disobedient themselves. Note that **Isaiah was directing his remarks to the leaders and people of wealth in Jerusalem**, not to the ordinary people. Wealth at this time was used to finance idol worship, drunkenness, and all sorts of evil behavior.⁴ But above all else **it was arrogance that God was attacking**; the arrogance of those who basked in their wealth and totally ignored the needs and cries of the poor. Yet they still religiously observed the festivals and rituals of the Temple.

Isaiah 1:4:

4 Ah, sinful nation, people laden with iniquity, offspring who do evil, children who deal corruptly, who have forsaken the Lord, who have despised the Holy One of Israel, who are utterly estranged!

God, the Holy One of Israel, has been abandoned and the people have chosen to worship false gods and idols. They have displeased God.

Isaiah 1:5.6:

5 Why do you seek further beatings? Why do you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds; they have not been drained, or bound up, or softened with oil.

⁴ Sawyer, John F. A., *Isaiah*, p. 9.

We're only in the fifth verse of the first chapter and things seem to be getting a little gruesome. Somebody or perhaps even a whole lot of people are apparently suffering from a rather serious ailment.

Isaiah 1:7,8:

7 Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence aliens devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.

8 And the daughter of Zion (Jerusalem)⁵ is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a shelter in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

Here we see a people destroyed by a foreign power. The lesson of verses 5-8 seems pretty obvious. If you keep rebelling against God, ultimately there will be judgment and punishment.

Judah's punishment for her disobedience was suffering under the repeated attacks of the Assyrian army. The whole idea of reward and punishment here is probably best described in Deuteronomy 11:26-28:

Deuteronomy 11:26-28, NAS

26 "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse:

27 the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today;

28 and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.

Isaiah 1:8 introduces us to the term daughter of Zion, which we explained earlier to mean "Jerusalem." The names of cities in the Hebrew language are in the feminine gender, thus the feminine reference, daughter. That is because throughout the Bible God compares His relationship with His people to the marriage relationship. Later in Isaiah (chapter 54) we will see that God tells His people He is their Husband. We see in the New Testament that the Church is called the Bride of Christ. **THIS COMPARISON SHOWS THE LOVE AND COMMITMENT GOD HAS FOR US.**

Isaiah 1:9:

9 If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

Lord of hosts signifies that God is not only the supreme commander of Judah's armies but also the Creator of everything. He also rules over the armies of Heaven and with such power rebellion against Him is senseless. The forces of nature are under His control as well as the military and political forces of all history. Just look at what He did to Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-29). Briefly, those two cities had been extremely sinful in

⁵ Parentheses added

many ways. They worshiped idols and participated in unspeakable sexual sins. This is where our term “sodomy” comes from.

Isaiah 1:10:

10 Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

As well as introducing the prophecy to come, verse 10 connects us to the previous verses. Sodom and Gomorrah are symbols of gross immorality (Genesis 18,19). The reference to these cities emphasizes the enormity of Israel’s evil and disobedience. The whole city has been contaminated by their leaders and a single judgment awaits them all, just as it did in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Even in the elaborate directions that God gave the Israelites for exactly how to make sacrifices, God emphasized the need for confession of sin and payment of restitution. Sacrifices of animals alone were not enough for people to be forgiven. God required, and still requires, a turning away from the sin and making right what they had done wrong. Leviticus 5:5 and 16:

⁵ *"When any of the people become aware of their guilt in any of these ways, they must confess their sin*

¹⁶ *They must then make restitution for whatever holy things they have defiled by paying for the loss, plus an added penalty of 20 percent. When they give their payments to the priest, he will make atonement for them with the ram sacrificed as a guilt offering, and they will be forgiven.*

When you hurt or offend someone, God is saying He wants you to be truly sorry and then to do whatever you can to make things right. If you stole something of value you are to replace it plus an additional twenty percent.

What do you think would happen if we applied this principle to our judicial system today, especially in regard to what is called white-collar crime? It would probably be much more effective than our current method of handling such criminals.

This requirement of God for forgiveness is very well stated in Psalm 51:16,17:

16 You would not be pleased with sacrifices, or I would bring them. If I brought you a burnt offering, you would not accept it.

17 The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, you will not despise.

God is dealing here with the contradiction between our outward religious actions and our

real lives, the masks we wear and our real self. The emphasis here is on Monday through Saturday, not just Sunday morning. So Isaiah is not only speaking to the Jews in Jerusalem but also to the churches in Wheaton as well as everywhere else.

Isaiah 1:11-13:

11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

12 When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more;

13 bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation— I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.

Based on what God is saying here to Israel, how do you think He feels about all the rituals and ceremonies that are acted out in so many churches? Do you think He looks favorably on people who light candles, or do penance, or make large cash donations, or try to win God's favor in any other way by doing good works? God hates these things **IF** there is not a full commitment of one's heart to serve Him according to His instructions in the Bible.

The word *Abomination* in verse 13 is a term for pagan practices which were forbidden among the Israelites (Leviticus 18:22; Deuteronomy 7:25; 2 Kings 23:13). Here we see the word applied by God to the regular worship of the Israelites at the Temple in Jerusalem. Leviticus 17:11 describes the role of blood in the sacrifice:

*11 for the life of any creature is in its blood. I have given you the blood so you can make atonement for your sins. **It is the blood, representing life,** that brings you atonement.*

We could safely translate this last part of verse 11 as: *It is the blood, representing life, that brings you forgiveness and everlasting life. One day in the future Christ would make the final blood sacrifice for all people for all time.* We see here in this Isaiah passage that God is rejecting the blood sacrifice of the Jews because it is mingled together with the blood of innocent victims. The blood is therefore representative of oppression and violence. Isaiah 1:14,15:

14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Then in Isaiah 1:16, God says:

16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your

*doings from before my eyes; **cease to do evil.***

This is a reference to **purity** rather than ritual washing. Like holiness, purity is a matter of the heart. God wants your heart. One was expected to live up to the ethical demands of their religion. Forgiveness is possible but it requires moral courage and obedience rather than going through some ritual or good work.

Basically God is saying that yes He had told them to bring sacrifices to the Temple as worship. But He is displeased with the fact that people merely go through the motions and their hearts aren't right with God. You see, God has always been most concerned about whether our hearts truly belong to Him. **THE ACTS OF WORSHIP ARE TO BE REFLECTIVE OF WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS.**

So then God outlines what will please Him in verses 17-20.

Isaiah 1:17:

17 learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

The test of obedience is not whether or not they kept the Ten Commandments or any of the other laws, but to what extent they sought after justice, correcting oppression, defending the fatherless, and pleading for the widow and orphan.

Isaiah 1:18 NKJV:

*18 “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like **scarlet**, They shall be as **white** as snow; Though they are **red** like crimson, They shall be as **wool**.”*

The two colors speak of the guilt of those whose hands were “*full of blood*” (verse 15). Snow and wool are substances that are naturally white, and therefore represent what is clean, the blood-guilt having been removed (Psalm 51:7). Forgiveness is not unconditional. It comes through repentance as verse 19 indicates. Isaiah concludes this section by reminding them that the road to blessing is paved with obedience.

Isaiah 1:19,20 NKJV:

*19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;
20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword”; For **the mouth of the Lord has spoken.***

If you obey, you'll be rewarded; if you disobey, you will be punished. All through the books of the Old Testament the choice is laid before us as it is here and in Deuteronomy 30:15,19:

*15 “Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between prosperity and disaster, between life and death.
19 “Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would **choose life**, that you and your descendants might live!*

In Isaiah’s teaching, it is a basic assumption that prosperity and peace depend on obedience, while defeat is the result of disobedience.

Isaiah 1:21-23:

*21 **How the faithful city has become a whore!** She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her— but now murderers!
22 Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water.
23 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow’s cause does not come before them.*

Again, because God likens His relationship with His people to a marriage relationship, when His people forsake Him, disobey and go astray, He compares that to their having an affair, or going to prostitutes. Bribery and corruption were commonplace. Widows and orphans were neglected. Jerusalem, the city which had once represented all that was good in the days of David and Solomon, had become filled with impurity and selfish indulgence. That which had been as pure as gold and silver had become “dross” (refuse).

One of the reasons we feel it so essential to teach this book is so that those who are willing to listen and learn will see the commonality between what happened to Judah and what is happening to the United States. For those of us who grew up in the forties and fifties, the evidence is quite clear. The culture that had for a large part been based on Judeo-Christian values and ethics has been seriously declining and is almost lost. Sex and general behavior have become perverted to a level far, far below anything I can remember as a young man. Rudeness and selfishness have become the standards of behavior. People ask, “*What’s in it for me personally?*” before making choices, rather than asking, “*What would God have me to do?*”

If anyone had promoted abortion, homosexuality, birth control devices for high school students, elimination of prayer in the schools, removal of the Ten Commandments from public buildings, same sex marriage, sexual molestation of children, or any of the other things that are being tolerated in this country today, they would have been ostracized. They would not have been heard.

But these things I've just mentioned reflect exactly what happened to the nation of Israel, both the northern and southern kingdoms, over a period of time. God does not close His eyes to such behavior, nor does He allow it to go unpunished forever. Sometimes He'll give people fifty years, maybe a hundred, or even two hundred years, but eventually they will pay for evil behavior. If we don't do something fast, our time of judgment in these United States is not far off.

But then God, "*the Mighty One of Israel*," offers some hope. Our God always does. He loves you more than you can imagine and He always wants to show you the way that will bring you blessing.

Isaiah 1:24-26:

*24 Therefore says the Sovereign, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: Ah, **I will pour out my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes!***

25 I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.

*26 And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called **the city of righteousness, the faithful city.***

We need to clarify the meaning of "*righteousness*" before going on. The term "*righteousness*" does not mean the same thing as "*justice*" or "*piety*" or "*self-righteousness*" or "*goodness*." It can suggest such things but when Isaiah uses it, he uses it to mean righteous acts that are carried out by God or man **on behalf of the poor and oppressed**. It is therefore translated as "*victory*" (Isaiah 41:2) or "*deliverance*" (Isaiah 51:5).

So the "*city of righteousness*" is the city that brings help to the widow and the orphan, and salvation to those in distress.

Because of all that Judah had done, the Lord would punish them. But they are still His covenant people and He will not break His covenant promises. He would remove the unjust and the unholy. He would cleanse the nation of all the evil that displeased Him. But then He would restore their judges as at first, and counselors as they were in the days when they were more inclined to walk with God. Then once more, *Jerusalem (Zion)*, will be called the "*city of righteousness, the faithful city*." **God's judgment of His people has future restoration as its goal.** They were subsequently restored from the Babylonian captivity around 535 BC, but in the books of prophecy a promise often has two meanings or two times in mind. This is one of those occasions. The promise made in verse 26 applies to the return from captivity, but it also has in view a much greater and more lasting restoration, **a permanent restoration**, which will make Jerusalem supreme among the nations (Jeremiah 3:17; Ezekiel 5:5; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:22; 14:16). The only such purging and restoration in the Bible is that which will occur in the future "*time*

of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:6, 7; Daniel 9:24-27) and the second coming of Jesus (Zechariah 14:4).

Isaiah 1:27-29:

27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.

28 But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

29 For you shall be ashamed of the oaks in which you delighted; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen.

Israel's sufferings must continue until the unrepentant transgressors and willful sinners are completely destroyed. Those then that remain, a faithful remnant, will seek forgiveness for their past sins and be ashamed of the many false gods they have worshipped, and seek the Lord Jesus with all their hearts.

Isaiah 1:30,31:

30 For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water.

31 The strong shall become like tinder, and their work like a spark; they and their work shall burn together, with no one to quench them.

All who do not turn from their sin will be consumed like a withered oak or a waterless garden, and they will serve as kindling to which Jesus will apply the torch.

As I've already alluded to, this chapter did not speak to the Jews alone. This chapter was also written for the Church, from the time of Christ until the present day. The failure of the Church, which has been given far greater knowledge through the New Testament than the Jews had, is thus even more glaring. The Church as well is facing the same type of judgment.

A society that dedicates itself to self-indulgence and neglects the poor and needy and the stranger within its gates is a corrupt and evil society and will eventually be destroyed by destructive pressures from both within and without. It will wither like a garden without water, and then burn incessantly at the slightest spark until it is totally destroyed. The punishment fits the crime: the tree worshippers (idol worshipers) will wither and die like trees in a forest fire. But God's promises in verses 17-19, 26, and 27 are what God wants people to respond to.

No matter how bad your sin, if you turn to God, give Him your heart and your love, and follow Him obediently, then He will bless you.