

WAY OF LIFE
COMMENTARY
SERIES



ISAIAH
DAVID W. CLOUD

Isaiah

Copyright 2018 by David W. Cloud
ISBN 978-1-58318-248-2



Published by Way of Life Literature
PO Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143 (toll free) - fbns@wayoflife.org
www.wayoflife.org

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4212 Campbell St. N., London Ont. N6P 1A6
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Printed in Canada by
Bethel Baptist Print Ministry

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Introduction to Isaiah

The Author of Isaiah

1. The name *Isaiah* is the Hebrew *Yesha-yahu* or *Yeshayaw*, meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” It is synonymous in meaning with Joshua and Hosea.

Jewish tradition says that Isaiah was closely connected to the royal family and that his father, Amoz, was the brother of King Amaziah and the uncle of Uzziah. It is clear that Isaiah had ready access to King Hezekiah (Isa. 37). “He was the historiographer at the king’s court in Jotham’s reign, and wrote accounts of the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (2 Ch. 24:22; 32:32)” (J. Sidlow Baxter).

2. Isaiah was married and his wife was a prophetess (Isa. 8:3). She is one of several prophetesses mentioned in Scripture, the others being Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jud. 4:4), Huldah (2 Ki. 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:8-9).

3. He had two children who were given prophetic names: *Shear-jashub* (“a remnant shall return”), and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* (“haste to the spoil”) (Isa. 7:3; 8:3). The children were signs to the nation of the coming judgment and of the remnant that would survive by God’s grace.

4. Isaiah was one of the most talented and influential men of history. He was a prophet, a preacher, a theologian, a social critic, a statesman who advised kings, a poet, a psalmist.

5. Talmudic Jewish tradition says that Isaiah was martyred by Manassah, the wicked son of Hezekiah, by being placed into a hollowed tree trunk and “sawn asunder” with a wooden saw. The Jewish historian Josephus described Manassah’s cruel persecutions as follows: “He barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he

spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflowed with blood.”

The Talmudic tradition about Isaiah’s death contains obvious mythical elements. Consider the account from the *Babylonian Talmud*:

“It is related in the Talmud that Rabbi Simeon ben ‘Azzai found in Jerusalem an account wherein it was written that Manasseh killed Isaiah. King Manasseh said to Isaiah, ‘Moses, thy master, said, There shall no man see God and live, but thou hast said, I saw the Lord seated upon his throne,’ and went on to point out other contradictions—as between Deuteronomy 4:7 and Isaiah 40:6; between Exodus 33:26 and 2 Kings 20:6. Isaiah thought: ‘I know that he will not accept my explanations; why should I increase his guilt?’ He then uttered the Unpronounceable Name, a cedar-tree opened, and Isaiah disappeared within it. Then King Manasseh ordered the cedar to be sawn asunder, and when the saw reached his mouth Isaiah died; thus was he punished for having said, ‘I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips’ (Yeb. 49b) (cited from “Isaiah,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*).

This is typical Talmudic nonsense, which is filled with fables and repeatedly justifies the Jews from judgments pronounced by God.

The Bible says that Isaiah prophesied *until* the reign of Hezekiah, which was before Manasseh, but it could be that he ceased his prophetic ministry in the days of Hezekiah yet lived until Manasseh.

It has been thought by some that Hebrews 11:37 refers to Isaiah’s death.

While it is possible that the Jewish tradition is based on some truth, there is no way to know for sure.

The Theme of Isaiah

The overall theme is found in Isaiah's name, which means "Jehovah's salvation." "In that one name is compressed the whole contents of the book" (Jennings). It refers to the salvation of Israel (Isa. 45:17), the salvation of the Gentiles (Isa. 45:22), and ultimately the salvation of the creation through Christ. Isaiah sees a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 66:22).

Isaiah a Little Bible

The book of Isaiah has been called the little Bible because both Isaiah and the Bible have 66 chapters, and both are further divided into 39 chapters and 27 chapters.

In the case of the Bible, the first segment of 39 chapters, the Old Testament, emphasizes law and judgment, whereas the second segment of 27 chapters, the New Testament, emphasizes grace and redemption. The same is true for Isaiah.

Isaiah 1-39 - Warnings (the coming judgment)

Isaiah 40-66 - Grace, Comfort, and Hope (the coming kingdom)

In the middle of the last section is Isaiah 53, the prophecy of Christ's sacrificial death. This explains how the holy God can be reconciled to sinful man and why there can be hope not only for Israel but for the whole world.

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah are not wholly about judgment, and the last 27 chapters are not wholly about redemption, for redemption messages are mixed into the first 39 chapters, and judgment warnings are mixed into the last 27 chapters.

The Historical Background of Isaiah

It is important to know the events that occurred during Isaiah's prophetic career. This helps us understand the context.

1. Isaiah ministered during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, a period of at least 60 years and probably more than 70 (Isa. 1:1). Though three of these kings were good, the people in general had rejected God's law and were worshipping idols. The nation was in a downward spiritual spiral toward complete apostasy and judgment, and Isaiah's prophecies were aimed at reproving them and calling them to repentance. In his very first prophecy, Isaiah described Israel as a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord" (Isa. 1:4).

2. Isaiah's ministry began about 240 years after the division of the kingdom into the southern and northern tribes during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12). An idolatrous system of worship had been set up in the northern tribes (1 Kings 12:26-33).

3. In Isaiah's day there was a veneer of external religion, but it was only skin deep (Isa. 1:10-15). The people thought of themselves as righteous lovers of Jehovah. The situation was very similar to that of America today. A large percentage of the people profess faith in Jesus, yet they brazenly break God's holy laws and the "Jesus" they worship is an idol of their own imagination who is a cool rock & roll guy who doesn't judge sin.

4. Part way through Isaiah's ministry, the northern tribes were carried away captive by the Assyrians and Judah was well on its way to destruction by the hands of the Babylonians. "When Isaiah came to the fore in Judah, the ten-tribed northern kingdom (Israel) was nearing its destruction by Assyria, after its apostate career of some two

hundred years, under no less than nineteen kings” (J. Sidlow Baxter).

5. Three other writing prophets ministered during Isaiah’s day, these being Jonah, Hosea, and Micah. Micah’s prophecies apparently set off a revival in Hezekiah’s day. See Jeremiah 26:18-19.

6. The major events that occurred during Isaiah’s ministry are associated with the lives of the kings that reigned in Judah in his lifetime (Isa. 1:1).

Uzziah (also called Azariah)

He took the throne at age 16 and reigned for 52 years (2 Ch. 26:3).

He was a good king for most of his career and enjoyed God’s blessing as a consequence (2 Ch. 26:4-5).

Even so, the people continued to worship idols (2 Ki. 15:4).

After achieving much good and many victories over Israel’s enemies, he became proud. He attempted to usurp the office of a priest and was smitten with leprosy (2 Ch. 26:16-21).

Jotham

He took the throne at age 25 and reigned for 16 years (2 Ch. 27:1).

He was a good king and worshipped Jehovah God instead of idols and was therefore blessed (2 Ch. 27:2, 6).

Though he was a good king, the people lived corruptly and did not obey God (2 Ch. 27:2). They continued to worship idols (2 Ki. 15:35).

During Jotham’s rule in Judah, Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, took the northern part of Israel captive (2 Ki. 15:29). This was the beginning of the end for the northern kingdom. King Pekah was assassinated and Hoshea took the throne (2 Ki. 15:30). Hoshea would be the last king of the northern tribes. (The historical records of Tiglathpileser, which are in

the British Museum, describe the destruction of Galilee, the assassination of Pekah, the enthronement of Hoshea, and other events that are found in Scripture. See *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* for documentation and PowerPoint slides of the amazing archaeological artifacts from these events.)

Ahaz

He was 20 years old when he took the throne and reigned 16 years (2 Ch. 28:1).

He worshipped Baal and sacrificed his children to heathen gods (2 Ch. 28:2-4).

Because of his idolatry and rebellion, God caused him to be defeated by the king of Syria (2 Ch. 28:5), by the king of Israel (the northern tribes) (2 Ch. 28:6), by the Edomites and Philistines (2 Ch. 28:16-18), and by the king of Assyria (2 Ch. 28:20). In one day the king of Syria killed 120,000 of Israel's valiant soldiers, slew the king's son and the governor of the king's house and the king's right hand man, and took captive 200,000 Jews (2 Ch. 28:6-8).

Ahaz took the silver and gold from the temple and hired the king of Assyria to attack Syria (2 Ki. 16:7-9). When Ahaz met the Assyrian king in Damascus, the capital of Syria, he saw an idolatrous altar and had a copy of it made and placed in the temple in Jerusalem (2 Ki. 16:10-13; 2 Ch. 28:23). He offered sacrifices on this pagan altar and turned the brazen altar of sacrifice into a soothsaying device (2 Ki. 16:14-15).

Ahaz shut the temple itself, which was the place of God's presence in Israel, and destroyed the vessels (2 Ch. 28:24).

The high priest, Urijah, was corrupt and did whatever Ahaz instructed (2 Ki. 16:16).

Idolatry spread throughout the land (2 Ch. 28:25).

Hezekiah

He took the throne at age 25 and reigned for 29 years (2 Ch. 29:1).

Hezekiah was one of Israel's best kings, following in the footsteps of David. He led the people in a spiritual revival which kept back God's judgment and resulted in the kingdom continuing for about another 120 years. His testimony in the early part of his life is found in 2 Ch. 31:20-21.

Hezekiah's revival appears to have begun with the preaching of the prophet Micah (Jer. 26:18-19).

In the first year of his reign, he cleansed and repaired and reopened the temple and charged the priests to prepare themselves for the true worship of God (2 Ch. 29:3-11). Hezekiah celebrated the reopening of the temple with a great worship service (2 Ch. 29:18-36). He reestablished the worship of God through song and music with the words of David and Asaph (2 Ch. 29:30).

He led the nation to keep the passover after it had been neglected for a long time (2 Ch. 30:1-27). Multitudes attended and it was the greatest festival since the days of Solomon. Though many of the people were not properly sanctified, God heard the prayer of Hezekiah and blessed them (2 Ch. 30:17-20). Here we see God's great mercy. There was great joy in Jerusalem and God heard the prayers of the Levites (2 Ch. 30:25-27). But in Ephraim and Manasseh and Zebulun, the representatives of the king were laughed to scorn and God's offer of forgiveness and help was foolishly rejected (2 Ch. 30:9-10).

After the passover the people broke down idolatrous altars and groves in many places (2 Ch. 31:1).

Hezekiah also instructed the people to bring their tithes and offerings for the support of the temple (2 Ch. 31:4-15).

Tithes and offerings are one way that God's people show honor to Him (Pr. 3:9).

The giving was to encourage the hearts of the priests in the law of God (2 Ch. 31:4). God's people are responsible to care for their preachers and teachers. Compare 1 Co. 9:13-14; 1 Ti. 5:17-18; Tit. 3:13-14; 3 Jo. 5-8.

Hezekiah chose godly priests to oversee the offerings (2 Ch. 31:12-15). Likewise, Paul taught that the men who are in charge of the offerings in the churches are to be faithful men with godly reputations (2 Co. 8:18-22).

As a result of Hezekiah's faithfulness, God blessed him and he was able to defeat the Assyrians and Philistines (2 Ki. 18:5-8).

In the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign, Shalmaneser king of Assyria besieged Samaria during the reign of Hoshea because of Israel's sin against God (2 Ki. 17:1-23; 18:9-12).

The siege of the heavily fortified city lasted three years, during which Shalmaneser died and Sargon II took the throne and oversaw the destruction of the city. It fell in 721 BC. The records of Sargon II, which are in the British Museum and the Louvre in Paris, describe the destruction of Samaria. The records of the Assyrian king Tiglathpileser describe the destruction of Galilee, the assassination of Pekah, the enthronement of Hoshea, and other events that are found in Scripture.

For a pictorial study on the destruction of Samaria, see *Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms*, PowerPoint # 13 "Samaria and Jezreel," and for a pictorial study of the Assyrian military see PowerPoint # 14 "Assyria."

The fall of Samaria marked the completion of the overthrow of Israel's northern kingdom that had begun in Pekah's day (2 Ki. 15:29) during the reign of Jotham of Judah.

The forceful repopulation of Samaria by the hand of the king of Assyria was the origin of the Samaritans who are mentioned in the New Testament. They are a mixed race and a mixed religion, part Jewish and part pagan (2 Ki. 17:24-41). The Samaritans were hated by the orthodox Jews and had no dealings with them (John 4:9).

For a pictorial study on the Samaritans, see *Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms*, PowerPoint # 13 "Samaria and Jezreel."

In the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked the cities of Judah. We see this same situation in the study in Isaiah 36-37.

Hezekiah was healed of a deadly disease at age 39 and was granted 15 more years to live (2 Ki. 20:1-11). See the study on Isaiah 38-39.

The Wonder and Beauty of Isaiah

1. The book of Isaiah is set at the head of the prophets because it belongs at the head.

Isaiah is greater in scope and depth and beauty than any other prophet. It comprehends and anticipates all the other prophetic books. Isaiah is a whole Bible in itself. It is an infinite book. The believer could study Isaiah for hours every day of his life and not begin to come to the end of its teaching.

Isaiah is a universe of prophetic truth, with many passages and single verses being a world of revelation in themselves. It is a whole paradise of divine revelation, filled with delight for the believing soul. It is a fabulously rich mine from which the diligent student can draw out spiritual wealth without end.

“The book that bears [Isaiah's] name, in the variety, beauty, and force of its style, and in the sublimity of its contents, takes the foremost place in the prophetic literature” (*James Robertson*).

“What Beethoven is in the realm of music, what Shakespeare is in the realm of literature, what Spurgeon was among the Victorian preachers, that is Isaiah among the prophets. ... All who have any sense of literary appreciation must be impressed by the combined excellencies of Isaiah's style--its grandeur and dignity, its energy and liveliness, its profusion of imagery, its vividness of description, its forceful play on words, its dramatic and rhetorical touches, and

last, but not least, its wonderful variety” (J. Sidlow Baxter).

“Isaiah is the great messianic prophet and prince of OT prophets. For splendor of diction, brilliance of imagery, versatility and beauty of style, profundity and breadth of prophetic vision, he is without peer” (Merrill Unger).

“As Isaiah stands out from all the other prophets by the sublimity of his conception, the elevation of his sentiments, and the grandeur of his style, so is he also by fulness and variety of subject matter” (William Kelly).

Even when viewed strictly as literature, Isaiah should rank at the head of ancient writings.

“The thing of chief importance is, that we are wholly unable to name a special peculiarity and favourite manner of style in the case of Isaiah. He is not the specially lyric, or the specially elegiac, or the specially rhetorical and monitory prophet, as, *e.g.*, Joel, Hosea, Micah, in whose writings a special manner is predominant; but every kind of style and every variation of exposition is at his command to meet the requirements of his subject; and this it is which in respect of style constitutes his greatness, as well as generally one of his most prominent excellences. His fundamental peculiarity is only the exalted majestic repose of style, proceeding from the full and sure command of his subject. This response by no means requires that the language should never be more violently agitated, and not blaze up where the subject demands it; but even the most extreme agitation is bridled by this repose in the background, and does not pass beyond its proper limits, and soon returns with higher self-mastery to its regular flow, not again to leave it (Isa 2:9-22; Isa 3:1; Isa 28:11-23; Isa 29:9-14)” (*H. Ewald, D. D.*).

“In all ages, Isaiah has been regarded as the most sublime of all writers. He is simple, bold, rapid, elevated; he abounds in metaphor, and in rapid transitions; his writings are full of the most sublime figures of rhetoric and the most beautiful ornaments of poetry. ... although his writings are not so ancient as those of Moses, or as those of Homer and Hesiod, yet they are more ancient than most of the admired Classic productions of Greece, and are far more ancient than any of the Latin Classics. As an ‘ancient writer’ Isaiah demands respect. And laying out of view altogether the idea of his inspiration, and his ‘religious’ character, he has a claim as a poet, an orator, a writer of eminent beauty and unrivaled sublimity to the attention of those who are seeking eminence in literature. No reason can be given why in a course of mental training, Isaiah, and the language in which he wrote, should be neglected, while Hesiod and Homer, with the language in which they wrote, should be the objects of admiration and of diligent culture. In no book, perhaps, can the mere man of taste be more gratified than in the study of Isaiah; by no writings would the mind be more elevated in view of the beautiful and the sublime, or the heart be more refined by the contemplation of the pure. Few--very few of the Greek and Latin Classical writers--can be put into the hands of the young without endangering the purity of their morals; but Isaiah may be studied in all the periods of youth, and manhood, and old age, only to increase the virtue of the heart and the purity of the imagination, at the same time that he enriches and expands the understanding” (Albert Barnes).

2. Isaiah’s prophecies are addressed to and encompass the whole earth (Isa. 1:2; 18:3; 34:1; 45:22; 49:1, 6; 54:5).

3. Isaiah sees the heart and character of God.

In Isaiah 6:1, the prophet says, “I saw God,” and it is God who is revealed in Isaiah’s prophecies. Isaiah sees Jehovah God in all aspects of His glorious character.

Isaiah 1-35

Warnings and Judgment

Throughout this section God interweaves His case against Israel, for breaking His law and abandoning Him for idols, with prophecies of coming judgment and prophecies that look beyond to kingdom blessing. The warnings are interspersed with many prophecies of future glory (e.g., Isa. 1:28 - 2:4). Isaiah calls judgment God's "strange work" (Isa. 28:21). Even though God is thrice holy and a God of law and justice, judgment is not what He loves. He delights in grace and blessing. So even in the midst of the darkest prophecies of judgment, God calls His people to repentance and frequently returns to the theme of the mercy that will be poured out in the last days.

Messianic prophecies appear throughout the section, pointing both to Christ's first and second comings. The purpose is to warn disobedient Israel and bring her to repentance as well as to encourage and strengthen the remnant of believers.

This section of Isaiah ends with a thrilling description of the coming kingdom, wherein the desert shall blossom as the rose, the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

Outline

Sermons pertaining to Judah and Israel (Isa. 1-12)

Prophecies Pertaining to the Nations (Isa. 13-27)

Prophecies of the Judgment and Restoration of Israel (Isa. 28-35)

Isaiah 1-12 Sermons Pertaining to Judah and Israel

Isaiah 1:2-23

Chapter 1 contains the two major themes of Isaiah in a nutshell: judgment because of unrepentant sin (Isa. 1:5-9) and restoration through God's mercy (Isa. 1:25-27).

In this passage we see an amazing revelation of the heart of God. He calls on heaven and earth to witness Israel's sin against Him. He is a tender, compassionate God who desires man's obedience and affection. He is personally affected by the rebellion and backsliding of his people, like a father by that of his children. Jesus described this aspect of God in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Though the son callously rebels against the father and squanders his wealth, the father loves him still. He earnestly waits for the prodigal's return and sees him when he is yet afar off (Lu. 15:20). This is the heart of Jehovah God.

Isaiah preaches the word of the Lord (Isa. 1:2, 10). The Bible claims to be the infallible Word of God. If it is not, it is a lie. There is no possible middle ground here. Phrases such as "thus saith the Lord" appear 172 times in Isaiah alone and over 2,400 times in the Old Testament.

1. Israel does not know her God (Isa. 1:2-3)

God calls on the heaven and earth to hear His charge against Israel. The Bible is not a book for one nation; it is God's revelation to the entire creation.

God describes Himself as Israel's owner. He uses the name "Jehovah," which is the name by which He revealed Himself as the faithful, covenant-keeping God (Isa. 1:2). The name "Jehovah" appears 427 times in Isaiah. As the Creator, God has the right to require that man obey Him, and man is

obligated to do so. The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc. 12:13).

God charges Israel with possessing less wisdom than a domesticated beast (Isa. 1:3). The reason that Israel did not know God is because she did not consider God (1:3). When men respond to the light that they have, God gives more light, as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10-11) and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-35).

“May we not well challenge our hearts as to how far we really know our Owner? To what extent do we sanctify Christ as Lord? He is our Owner now. Other lords have had dominion over us, but by Him only will we now make mention of the ineffable Name. The kingdom of God for us is that of the Son of His love. To the Crucified we owe unswerving allegiance. Our Master's crib is the Word of God, a part of which we have now before us. Do we really know it? Does hunger ever drive us to it; or, are we often found foolishly sniffing the desert air, following the wind like the wild ass, our backs on God's wellfilled storehouse, vainly seeking a satisfactory portion in the world we have professed to judge? Solemn questions these, not to be evaded or ignored, but faced in the presence of the Lord” (H.A. Ironside).

2. Israel is laden with iniquity (1:4-6).

In God's eyes the nation was corrupt through and through. His indictment of Israel by the prophet Isaiah was devastating.

They are rebellious children (Isa. 1:2; 30:1).

They are a diseased body (Isa. 1:6).

They are Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 1:10).

They are religious hypocrites (Isa. 1:11-15).

They are given over to harlotry (Isa. 1:21).

They are involved in murder (Isa. 1:21).

Their princes are rebellious and corrupt (Isa. 1:23).

They are given over to idolatry (Isa. 2:8).

They joined house to house (Isa. 5:8).
They are enflamed with wine and music (Isa. 5:11-12, 22; 28:1-3).
They draw iniquity with cords of vanity (Isa. 5:18).
They call good evil and evil good (Isa. 5:20).
They are wise in their own eyes (Isa. 5:21).
They are hypocritical (Isa. 10:6).
They are lying children (Isa. 30:9).
They hate the true prophets (Isa. 30:9-11).
They trust in perverseness (Isa. 30:12).
They trust in Egypt rather than God (Isa. 31:1).
They call themselves Israelites but not in truth or righteousness (Isa. 48:1).
Their righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).
They walk after their own thoughts (Isa. 65:2).
They have chosen their own ways (Isa. 66:3).

This is also a description of the condition of the individual sinner before God. Compare Romans 3:10-18.

Here the name “holy one of Israel” appears for the first time (Isa. 1:4). It appears 30 times altogether in Isaiah, 29 times referring to Jehovah God (Isa. 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14) and once referring to the Messiah (Isa. 49:7). God judges man on the basis of His own holiness, and by that standard every man fails. We have all come short of God’s righteousness (Ro. 3:23). The standard of God’s law is perfect righteousness. The law is a mirror to show man his sinfulness (Ro. 3:19-20). Apart from God’s law, man deceives himself into thinking that he is righteous by judging himself according to some human standard, philosophy, or religious tradition, and by judging himself by other fallen men.

3. God was provoked to anger by Israel’s rebellion (Isa. 1:4).

The anger of God is something that is preached very little in modern Christianity, even in the most conservative churches,

but it is a major theme of Scripture (e.g., Nu. 11:1; 12:2; 24:3-4; 32:10; De. 4:25; 6:15; 29:20; Jos. 7:1; 23:16; Jud. 2:12-14; 3:8; 10:7; 2 Sa. 6:7; 24:1; 1 Ki. 15:30; 16:13, 26, 33; 22:53; 2 Ki. 13:3; 17:11; 21:6; 23:19, 26; 24:20; Ps. 21:9).

4. God had chastened Israel but she had not repented (Isa. 1:5, 7-8).

He had used their enemies to devour the land and only Jerusalem, “the daughter of Zion,” was left (Isa. 1:5). The “daughter of Zion” and the “daughter of my people” is Jerusalem personified as the beloved daughter of the people of Israel. It is “the hill of Jerusalem” (Isa. 10:32). “Daughter” is a term of endearment. The “daughter of my people” is likened to a comely and delicate woman (Jer. 6:2). In the prophets, Jerusalem is called “the daughter of my people” 11 times (Isa. 22:4; Jer. 4:11; 6:14, 26; 8:11, 19, 21, 22; 9:1, 7; 14:17) and “the daughter of Zion” 16 times (Isa. 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Jer. 4:31; 6:2, 23; Mic. 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zep. 3:14; Zec. 2:10; 9:9). In Jeremiah, as the armies of Babylon approach, the daughter is hurt (Jer. 8:21), is sick without a physician (Jer. 8:22), is besieged (Jer. 6:23), wails (Jer. 4:31), cries (Jer. 8:19). “The daughter” is also Israel herself identified intimately with Jerusalem, her chief city and glory. See Zep. 3:14. In Christ’s kingdom, “the daughter of Zion” will put on her beautiful garments and be holy and will rejoice and prosper (Isa. 52:1-2; 62:11-12; Mic. 4:8; Zep. 3:14). A cottage in a vineyard and a lodge in a garden are small, sometimes temporary, buildings used to shelter those who watch over agricultural land. Such structures stand alone in a field. I have seen many of these in western Turkey and Slovakia.

5. This is the first mention of “the remnant” (Isa. 1:9). Through all of Israel’s troubles and her dispersion God promised to leave a remnant. This is one of the themes of Old Testament prophecy. Compare Isa. 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 16:14;

28:5; 37:31-32; 46:3; Jer. 31:7; Am. 4:15; Mic. 2:12; 5:7-8; Zep. 2:7, 9; 3:13; Zec. 8:12.

6. God likens Israel to Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 1:10). This is a powerful indictment and doubtless greatly offended the self-righteous Jews. Not only were Sodom and Gomorrah Gentile cities, but they also were so filthy that God destroyed them from the face of the earth (Ge. 19:24). Observe that the prophet does not draw back from delivering the most offensive messages. Every preacher is obligated to do this (2 Ti. 4:2; Tit. 1:12-13; 2:15). Israel is still like Sodom and Gomorrah in modern times. Tel Aviv is known as one of the most “gay friendly” cities on earth and its annual “gay pride” week draws tens of thousands of participants.

7. Both the rulers and the people were guilty (Isa. 1:10). From a human perspective, the people blame the rulers and the rulers blame the people, but God blames both. Each have their own responsibility before God. The rulers are responsible to lead the people in justice and righteousness and will be judged accordingly. The people are responsible to follow in justice and righteousness. No one can blame someone else for his or her sin. A child cannot blame a parent, and a church member cannot blame a pastor.

8. God points them to the perfect standard of His Word (Isa. 1:10). This is the absolute standard by which every doctrine and deed is to be tested. The Baptist principle that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice is exactly what is taught in Scripture. The New Testament teaches the same thing. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we are taught that the divinely inspired Scripture is able to make the man of God “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Obviously nothing else is necessary.

9. God rejects their religious rituals because they are not based on righteousness and truth but are “taught by the precept of men” (Isa. 1:11-15). The prophet mentions their sacrifices, oblations, incense, feasts, sabbaths, assemblies, and

prayers. (An “oblation” refers to a non-bloody offering--Le. 2:1; 6:14; 9:17.) It is obvious that the Jews, though idolatrous and wicked, retained a zeal for religion. Man uses religion to salve his guilty conscience, but it is in vain. We must not be deceived into thinking that God is pleased merely because we play at church. The average church today is no better than ancient Israel. There is a form of godliness, but it is not accompanied by the new birth and zealous holy living and separation from wickedness and faithful obedience to God’s Word. God does not accept religion that is not conformed to His Word and backed up by righteous living. Acceptable worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Jesus Christ established His church and delivered correct church doctrine to the apostles, and He instructed His disciples to teach exactly the same doctrine from generation to generation. See Mt. 28:19-20; 2 Ti. 2:2.

10. Their hands were full of blood (Isa. 1:15).

Ezekiel mentions the shedding of blood five times in one prophecy (Eze. 22:1-12).

They sacrificed their own children to Molech (2 Ki. 16:3; 17:17; Jer. 32:35; Eze. 20:31), just as modern “Christian” nations have slaughtered their children through abortion to the gods of lust, covetousness, and selfish convenience.

They had murdered their prophets and other righteous men (Jer. 2:30). Manassah “filled Jerusalem with innocent blood” (2 Ki. 24:4). Josephus described Manassah’s cruel persecutions as follows: “He barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflowed with blood.” Jehoiakim had killed the prophet Urijah (Jer. 26:20-23).

They had not put murderers to death according to God’s law, which had polluted the land before God. See Numbers 35:30-34.

11. God calls them to repentance (Isa. 1:16-20).

This passage presents the requirement of the law of Moses, which is obedience, but it also looks beyond the law to the offer of God's free grace. The law was never intended as a means of salvation. It was given to reveal God and His righteous requirements, to show man his lost condition, and to lead him to salvation in Christ. The law looked forward to the grace of God purchased on Calvary. See Galatians 3:10-13, 24-26.

The standard required by the law of Moses is perfect righteousness --"cease to do evil" (Isa. 1:16). This is the message of Mt. Sinai: of blessing through obedience and cursing through disobedience (Isa. 1:19-20). Since the law required perfect obedience it could only bring a sinner to the place of condemnation. As we have seen in Galatians 3, it was given to lead us to Christ. After the believer comes to Christ he is not under the old law but the new. The believer's law is Christ and the Spirit (2 Co. 3:14-18).

Isaiah looks beyond the law of Moses and preaches mercy (Isa. 1:18).

This was a message of salvation for the believing remnant within the nation Israel. Every individual who was saved under the law of Moses was saved by God's grace through faith. See Romans 4:6-8; 9:30-33. God's salvation is the full forgiveness of sin through Christ's atonement. Through His blood, our sins are made clean. David described this in Psalm 51:7. "No more blessed proclamation of full amnesty is found in all the Bible than in this lovely verse. It is the offer of full judicial cleansing for every repentant soul, no matter how grievous his record may have been. Well may Isaiah be called "the evangelical prophet." A wondrous gospel pervades all his pages, though warnings of judgment are ever before us" (H.A. Ironside).

Isaiah 1:18 also looks forward to the New Covenant that God will make with Israel, wherein He will forgive and convert them. Compare Jer. 31:33-35.

12. God wants to reason with man and call him to salvation (Isa. 1:18). This is an amazing fact. It is no wonder that the Psalmist proclaimed, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:4; 144:3). The thrice holy God invites men to come to Him and to communicate with Him. He is not a God that is aloof, not a God far off. Paul preached that it is God's will that men "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). If an individual is not willing to seek God and listen to Him, he will not be saved. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus described four different attitudes that men have toward God's Word. All men are sinners, but all men do not respond the same way to the gospel. The first kind of man is likened to seed sown on the wayside that is eaten by the fowls (Mt. 13:4). Jesus interpreted this as follows: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side" (Mt. 13:19). Observe that the Word of God is caught away by the devil because the individual does not make an effort to understand it.

13. The repetition of God's call to sinners is evidence of the greatness of God's love and mercy to undeserving sinners. This call is repeated in the prophets so much that it is almost tedious. In Isaiah alone we see this in 1:16-19; 8:13-14; 27:5; 28:12; 30:15; 31:6; 33:13; 34:1; 40:26; 41:1, 21-24; 42:18, 23; 43:9, 26; 45:20-22; 46:12-13; 48:14-18; 49:1; 51:4-6; 52:10; 55:1-3, 6-7; 56:1-2; 57:19; 61:1; 65:1-3. God says, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people" (Isa. 65:2). God is not obligated to give any invitations, but He is motivated to do so by His great love for His creatures. He went to great lengths to provide redemption, and He desires that all sinners will be saved (1 Ti. 2:3-5; 2 Pe. 3:9). Think of the person you love most in the world. If you knew that this person was in danger, you would plead with and beg him or her to turn back and be saved.

One or two or three pleas would not suffice. That is God's compassionate heart for every sinner.

Isaiah 1:24 - 2:22

Mingled prophecies of blessing and judgment

The major prophetic events surrounding Christ's return are described in this passage. These events are treated in more detail later in the book of Isaiah, but here the prophet looks beyond the apostasy of his day and Israel's wickedness to her restoration and blessing. It reminds us again that God delights in mercy more than judgment.

1. The destruction of Israel's enemies (Isa. 1:24)

Israel's enemies are God's enemies. They will be judged and Israel will be blessed.

2. The spiritual conversion of Israel (Isa. 1:25-26)

God will convert Israel and establish her judges and counselors. In that day Jerusalem will be called "The city of righteousness, the faithful city." That certainly does not describe Jerusalem today.

3. The judgment of those that sin in Israel (Isa. 1:27-31)

All Jews will not be saved; only a remnant. The rest will be destroyed. The oaks and gardens refer to the places of idolatry that Israel had planted in imitation of the heathen (De. 12:2-3; 2 Ki. 14:23; 16:4; 17:10). Idolaters love beautiful places; they worship the creation more than the Creator. The most beautiful places on earth are oftentimes the scenes of the greatest spiritual darkness.

4. The establishment of the global kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-5)

Isaiah 2:1-3 is repeated in Micah 4:1-3. These prophets lived contemporary with one another.

This will happen in “the last days” (Isa. 2:2). The terms “last days” and “latter days” (translated from the same Hebrew and Greek words) appear 27 times in the Bible and refer to that period of time during which God will complete His plan for mankind. The last days began with the first coming of Christ (Heb. 1:2; 1 Pe. 1:20). It encompasses the church age (1 Jo. 2:18), the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:23-24), the regathering and regeneration of the nation Israel (Hos. 3:5), the second coming and glorious earthly reign of Christ (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1). And the last days extends to the final judgment of the unsaved (Joh. 12:48).

This passage describes God’s kingdom government metaphorically as a mountain, and it will be headquartered in the temple (“the mountain of the Lord’s house”). God’s kingdom is also described as a mountain in Daniel 2:35. It will be established above all other human governments (the mountains and the hills, Isa. 2:2). According to Ezekiel, the millennial temple will be built on a literal mountain (Eze. 40:2; 43:12). Zechariah tells us that the topography of Jerusalem will be changed dramatically at Christ’s return (Zec. 14:4, 10). “The religious and political systems will be closely related. ... Israel’s political-religious system, directed by the Messiah-King, will be predominant in the world” (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

In that day the Gentile nations will come to Jerusalem and bow before the God of Israel (“the God of Jacob,” Isa. 2:3) and will recognize God’s kingdom as supreme. The whole world will be taught God’s law. Today the nations despise Israel and hate God’s law, but in that day they will be humbled and will obey on pain of the rod of iron. Jerusalem will be the headquarters for worship and instruction. That Zion is Jerusalem is evident in verse 3. The name “Zion” means citadel and it originally referred to a hill of Jerusalem that was conquered by David (2 Sa. 5:7). It often refers to the entire city of Jerusalem. See also Ps. 48:2. “Just as at a former period men had been separated and estranged from one

another in the plain of Shinar, and thus different nations had first arisen; so would the nations at a future period assemble together on the mountain of the house of Jehovah, and there, as members of one family, live together in amity again. And as Babel (*confusion*, as its name signifies) was the place whence the stream of nations poured into all the world; so would Jerusalem (the *city of peace*) become the place into which the stream of nations would empty itself, and where all would be reunited once more” (Keil and Delitzsch).

Christ will judge the nations from His headquarters in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:4). The millennial reign will begin with a judgment, and only those who qualify will enter the kingdom (Mt. 25:31-46). After that, the kingdom will be ruled by a rod of iron (Ps. 2:7-9; Re. 2:27; 19:15). Saints rather than sinners will sit on the throne of judgment. Ruling with “a rod of iron” represents unyielding, absolute government under which men are required to conform to the righteous standards of God” (John Walvoord). Justice and righteousness will reign because injustice and unrighteousness will be punished and punished swiftly. Christ’s kingdom will not be a democracy but a divine dictatorship, a theocracy, and no one will be given a choice as to whether or not to serve Him. His Word will be the absolute law and every individual will be required to obey; disobedience will be dealt with quickly and rigorously.

The nations will turn their weapons into instruments of agriculture (Isa. 2:4). The terrible wars that have characterized man’s history will be forgotten and finally there will be peace on earth. Every peace program that leaves out Jesus Christ is doomed to failure. The military industry will be shut down and the war colleges closed and man’s resources and energy will be devoted to good. Total global sales of arms for 2016 was \$31 billion. The modern peace movement misuses Isaiah 2:4. It is inscribed on a wall across from the United Nations headquarters in New York City, and there is a statue in the U.N. garden depicting a man beating a

sword into a plowshare. But the nations will not beat their swords into plowshares before Jesus returns in power and glory and forces them to do so. Until then, the appropriate text is found, rather, in Joel 3:10-11. The greatest wars this world has witnessed are yet future and will occur during the Great Tribulation. Compare Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 6:3-8; 16:14-16; 19:19-20.

Isaiah ends this passage with the plea to Israel to come to God and walk in His light (Isa. 2:5). The prophet is moved deeply by the vision of the glory of God's kingdom and exhorts his people to stop being foolish and disobedient, but his earnest plea was ignored and Israel rushed on to judgment.

5. The rebuke of Israel's paganism and idolatry (Isa. 2:6-9)

Here the vision of the future ends and the Lord returns to His rebuke of Israel's sin. The Lord did not forsake His people in vain; He forsook them because of their unrepentant sin. Here he mentions some particular sins:

They had turned to the paganism of the eastern nations (Isa. 2:6). Soothsaying refers to the attempt to foretell the future. It describes practices such as fortune telling, astrology, and various means of occultic divination (card reading, casting lots, examining the palm, etc.). Balaam was a soothsayer (Jos. 13:22), as was the girl who was demon possessed in Acts 16:16. The Roman Catholic Church adopted many of its practices, such as the Mary and the baby, veneration of relics, the mass, and the rosary, from paganism. Formerly "Christian nations" such as England, Canada, and America have turned to eastern paganism in our day. Especially since the 1960s there has been a great influx of Hinduism, Buddhism, yoga, astrology, fortune telling, and other occultic practices. The "evangelical" contemplative prayer movement, which is borrowed from Roman Catholic mysticism, is leading many toward "the east." It is influenced by men such as Thomas Merton, a Catholic monk who was also a

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