

## ISAIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Isaiah chapter 1 as we are going to begin a fascinating study into this prophetic book. Also, as we begin this book we are in the last major division of the Old Testament. The divisions break down like this; we have the Law, which covered Genesis through Deuteronomy. Then we moved into the historical books, which covered Joshua through Esther. From there we moved into the poetic books, which covered Job through Song of Solomon. And now we are beginning the last major division of the Old Testament books, the prophetic books, which cover Isaiah through Malachi.

These prophetic books are also broken down into two main divisions, the Major Prophets; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Then we have the Minor Prophets; which cover Hosea through Malachi, including Lamentations which was written by Jeremiah. Now why these divisions of major and minor prophets? It is not that one is more important than the other, but just the volume of the book. Isaiah contains 66 chapters, Jeremiah 52 chapters, and-so-on. In saying that don't take the Minor Prophets lightly. These small books are packed with prophetic revelations as we shall see when we get to them.

Let me set the stage for what we will be seeing in this book. Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Also at this time we see that Micah was ministering to the Southern Kingdom while Hosea was ministering to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was only some 20 years away from its captivity by the Assyrians because of their wickedness and idolatry.

Keep in mind that the Assyrians were the power in the region and their power was growing under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser. And they were not only a threat to the Northern Kingdom of Israel but also to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. But I think this is a secondary issue for both kingdoms. You see, the bigger issue was the condition of their hearts. They had turned from the true and living God and because of that these external forces were a threat. By 721 B. C. the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians and they were taken into captivity.

I think in this country we see the threat to our nation as groups of people like the ACLU or governmental powers; powerful countries like Russia or China or the European Community, or powerful organizations like Al Qaeda! I don't agree with that at all. Like with the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, these are just secondary issues. The main issue is that we have turned away from God, the thoughts of men's hearts are evil and thus, judgment is going to come upon us because of that and God will use whoever He wants to bring that judgment either from the outside or from within our own country!

The real issue is this, **"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."** II Chronicles 7:14. Apart from that happening, judgment is coming, it is at the door!

That is why God raised up these prophets, to warn the people, to get the people back on track, to have them return to God. For Isaiah, his ministry is to the Southern Kingdom warning them of the judgment that was to come if they don't wake up and get right with God. As we are going to see, Isaiah's call does not come till chapter 6, but already in chapter 1 we are going to see him warn God's people to repent before God's judgment comes upon them.

And all of us who are Bible believing Christians, who believe that God became flesh and dwelt among us to pay in full the penalty for our sins, we are the prophets in a sense, warning people of the coming judgment upon this Christ rejecting world. And like in Isaiah's day, they have the opportunity to accept it and come back to God or reject it and face the judgment of God!

And as we will see, God is going to speak with great detail regarding what is going to happen, prophecy is one of those areas that shows us God is God because He can tell us what is going to happen before it does! In fact, here in Isaiah God challenges these other god's to speak forth future events down to the smallest detail. But they can't; only God can and does!

We see this in Isaiah 44:6-8, "**Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.'**"

That is a problem for us, not knowing what is going to happen or as one writer put it, "the solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time." How true that is! I don't care how smart someone may be, I don't care if someone says they can predict the future, we can't know the future unless God speaks to us and that is what He will do in this book of Isaiah as well as the entire Bible!

Now before we dig into this book there are a couple of things I need to say, some issues I would like to clear up. Keep in mind that before the 18<sup>th</sup> Century most believed that Isaiah was written by Isaiah. But in the 18th Century the so-called “Higher Critics” came out with the “Deutero-Isaiah” and what they are saying is that chapters 1-39 were written by someone with an Assyrian background, and chapters 40-66 were written by someone else with a Babylonian background. Some even go as far to say that there may have been as many as three different people that wrote the book of Isaiah! And I am sure there are many variations to this, but the idea or point they are making is that Isaiah did not write this book.

Do you know what I say to that? *HOGWASH!* People are so foolish in the conclusions they come to because they don't trust the Word of God. First of all, Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**” I think that is very clear, the Word of God has been given to us by God, breathed from the lips of God and if it wasn't then it would not be profitable for us but it is!

But there is more and if these so-called scholars writing these foolish papers would only read the Word of God their theories would fall by the wayside. But they don't and thus, their PhD's are just that, piled high and deep with foolishness!

Let me just show you how easy it is to prove that Isaiah wrote the book of Isaiah or my second point. All you have to do is read John 12:37-41, which says, **“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’ These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.”**

Now just reading through this you might miss the point but I think God was showing these fools who believe Isaiah did not write this and at least two other people did how wrong they were going to be. You see, John attributes these quotes from Isaiah to Isaiah! Imagine that! The first one is from Isaiah 53:1 and the other from Isaiah 6:9-10. That means that Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah. You see, if they would only take the time to search out the Scriptures instead of trying to refute them, they would clearly see there was only one Isaiah that wrote this book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – ***AND IT WAS ISAIAH!***

And I realize that there are those that may struggle with this but listen to what J. Vernon McGee wrote. He gives to us a good perspective of how foolish these people are. This is what he had to say,

Let me illustrate how ridiculous the double or triple Isaiah hypothesis really is. Suppose a thousand years from today some archaeologists are digging in different parts of the world. One group digs in Kansas, another in Washington, D.C., and another group digs in Europe. They come up with the conclusion that there must have been three Dwight Eisenhower's. There was a General Eisenhower, the military leader of the victorious Allied forces of World War II in the European theater. There was another Eisenhower who was elected president of the United States in 1952 and 1956. There was still another Eisenhower, an invalid and victim of a heart attack and of a serious operation for ileitis [crohn's disease]. This illustration may seem ridiculous to some people, but that is exactly how I feel when I hear the critics talk about three Isaiah's. Of course there was only one man by the name of Dwight Eisenhower who fulfilled all the requirements without any absurdity. The same is true of Isaiah.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 185

I think that is pretty clear. Now there is another issue and this one many attribute to the entire Bible, from Genesis through Revelation and that issue is that this text has been altered in its transmittal over the thousands of years since it has been written and re-written. We have dealt with this in previous studies and thus, I am just going to focus on the text of Isaiah here since that is what we are dealing with. Keep in mind that the oldest manuscript we have of the Old Testament and the book of Isaiah was from 916 A. D., over 1,400 years after it was originally written. So many said there were many errors in this book, there had to be!

But then, in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were found and in them was a complete scroll of Isaiah, which you can go and see today in the museum called The Shrine of the Book in Israel. When you compare this text, which dates to about 100 B. C. to the text from 916 A. D. there is no major difference in the two. The integrity of the text has held up for over 1000 years, and thus, it can be trusted as being accurate!

The fascinating thing about this is you can go to Israel today, and visit the museum called the Shrine of the Book, which holds this priceless Biblical manuscript, and if you were able to read Hebrew, you would discover the reading of Isaiah is almost identical to the Jewish text that is over 2000 years old! There is no major difference between the two.

Imagine that, the book of Isaiah has 66 chapters, 1292 verses, 37,044 words, and the integrity of the text has held up all these years for over 1000 years between those two manuscripts.

According to Norman Geisler and William Nix, in their book A General Introduction to the Bible, they said, "Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of those letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word 'light' which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly . . . ***Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission - and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.***"

After comparing the entire Isaiah manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls with the present Hebrew text of Isaiah, Old Testament scholar Gleason L. Archer concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls “Prove to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.” Not bad when you consider they did not have computers, spell-checking, and-so-on, as we have today. So the text is accurate, it can be trusted and thus, don’t listen to those that try to discredit the Word of God. They will go back to the dust of the earth and God’s Word will endure forever!

Let me also say this in regards to this idea of a prophet, what is a prophet? A prophet foretold the future or spoke of future events that would come to pass and to be a prophet of God they had to be 100% accurate. Now we tend to focus on that one issue, foretelling but that was only part of their ministry. A prophet also forthtold the truths of God or spoke the Words of God! Both were important and a part of their ministry.

Now in a general sense, those who proclaim the truths of God found in the Word of God are prophets of God, but not in the sense we read of them in the Scriptures. I realize that today we see people that call themselves apostles and prophets, but I truly believe these ministries, these offices have come to an end in the first century A. D. The reason I say this is based on what Paul said in Ephesians 2:20 as he said that the church, **“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.”**



You see, apostles and prophets laid the foundation, the doctrine or the Word of God that we have today. And you can read in Ephesians 4:11 of these offices in the church that God has given to His people and I truly believe the offices that remain are the evangelists, pastor/teachers and teachers to open up and instruct people from the Word of God. No longer do we have new doctrine for the Word of God is complete. No longer are there apostles, for to be an apostle you had to see the resurrected Lord. These ministries laid the foundation in which these other ministries are now being built upon!

Regarding the book of Isaiah, Merrill F. Unger wrote, “Isaiah . . . is the greatest of the Hebrew prophets and orators. For splendor of diction, brilliance of imagery, versatility and beauty of style, he is unequalled. Correctly he has been called the ‘Prince of Old Testament Prophets.’”

One last point and it builds upon what Merrill F. Unger wrote. In the New Testament we can find at least 66 direct quotations and some have found 85 quotations and allusions to this book. Out of the twenty-seven New Testament books, twenty of them have direct quotations from Isaiah. In fact, as you look at this book you will see that the book of Isaiah is like a miniature Bible. What do I mean by that? You will see that in the first thirty-nine chapters, like the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, they will deal with judgment upon idolatrous men. But the final twenty-seven chapters, like the twenty-seven books of the New Testament declare a message of hope in the coming Messiah! I believe the Lord has some very powerful lessons for us to learn as we study the book of Isaiah. With that said, let’s begin reading in Isaiah chapter 1, starting in verse 1 as we dig into this powerful book and see what the Lord has for us.

**ISAIAH 1****VERSE 1**

1. First of all the name “**Isaiah**” means “Yahweh is salvation” or “The Lord saves” and before Isaiah brings us to that place of salvation he is going to show us the depth of our sin. You see, you have no need of a Savior unless you first recognize you are a sinner.

2. Now this period of Israel’s history is told in II Kings 15 through 21 and II Chronicles 26 through 33. Isaiah was a contemporary of the prophets Hosea and Micah like I have said and by the time of Isaiah the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, and Amos had already completed their ministry.

We are also told that he is the “**son of Amoz**” but we don’t know much more than that. Rabbinic tradition tells us that Amoz was the brother of Amaziah, and he was a King in Judah. But again that is tradition. What we do know of Isaiah is that he was married to a prophetess, (8:3). He had at least two sons, (7:3, 8:3). We are not sure how Isaiah died but tradition and other writings seem to indicate that he was sawn in two at the hands of wicked King Manasseh, Hezekiah’s son. One of the early church fathers, Justin Martyr, who lived from 100-165 A. D. spoke of this being the case, and even Josephus speaks of this. There may even be a hint of this happening to Isaiah in Hebrews 11:37 where we are told, “**They were stoned, they were sawn in two . . .**”

3. Even though Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah not many people listened to his message. Can you imagine what he went through, ministering for some 60 years, from around 740 to 680 B. C. and people turned away from him, they did not want to hear what he had to say or really what God was saying to them through Isaiah!

4. As this chapter opens up we are told the timeframe that Isaiah ministered in, it was during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. But as we are going to see, I think his calling actually came in the year King Uzziah died and we will see that in Isaiah chapter 6.

Now looking at this time period which Isaiah was ministering in, Uzziah was a good King who reigned for 52 years. He built up the land, made it strong, made it wealthy, but towards the end of his life, when his heart was lifted up, pride set in, he went into the Temple of God to offer incense. This was something that only the priests were to do, and as they tried to stop him he became angry with them. It was at this point Uzziah was struck upon his forehead with leprosy.

Thus, he had to live out the remainder of his life in isolation, co-reigning with his son, Jotham. It could be that during this time of prosperity that their hearts drifted away from God, even though they were very religious, going through all the motion but no emotion, no relationship. Sounds very much like our nation!

5. Jotham, for the most part, was a very good King who reigned for 16 years. But his son, Ahaz, was a wicked King who burned his sons in the fire to the god Molech. He also made a treaty with the Assyrian King, Tiglath-Pileser to help him defeat Rezin King of Syria and Pekah the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel who were coming against him. Because Assyria gave him victory he adopted their worship practices. And in the end God brought judgment by the hands of the Edomites, the Philistines and even the Assyrian's because Ahaz "**... had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD.**" II Chronicles 28:19.

6. Then we see King Hezekiah who reigned for 29 years and was also a good King. It was during his reign that Sennacherib; King of Assyria surrounded the city and threatened to destroy them if they did not surrender to him. And here we see both Hezekiah and Isaiah pray to the Lord to deliver them from this King and that night the Angel of the Lord defeated 185,000 Assyrians, which caused the rest to return home without a fight.

But at the end of his reign Hezekiah also fell and did some foolish things that caused problems in the land. And in his death, his son, Manasseh reigned, and he was one of the most wicked Kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And so, this is where Isaiah is at as God is going to speak through him.

7. I think every generation thinks that theirs is the worst, but look at Isaiah and the people who he was ministering to. They did not want to get right with God. They did not want to hear the Word of God. They wanted to have their ears tickled and in the end, instead of freedom they were taken into captivity as judgment fell. Again, our nation and our generation are not much different and unless something changes quickly, judgment is coming!

VERSES 2-4

1. This is a sad indictment against God's people as God calls for all of creation to come into this cosmic courtroom you might say and hear how Judah, God's people rebelled against Him. The One who gave them life, birthed the nation they have turned away from.

He speaks of nature, dumb animals being smarter than rebellious man in this rebuke. An ox may be dumb and yet it recognizes its master. A donkey is a very stubborn creature and yet it knows who provides food for them. And yet God's own people don't recognize their Master, the One who has provided for them. And maybe it was the prosperity they were enjoying; they saw no need for a real relationship with God, just the religious motions, which God saw as empty.

2. Let me share this story with you and then I will show you how it fits in with what Judah did and what we do today. We are told,

A colleague at Boston College . . . once asked members of his philosophy class to write an anonymous essay about a personal struggle over right and wrong, good and evil. Most of the students, however, were unable to complete the assignment. "Why?" he asked. "Well," they said – and apparently this was said without irony – "we haven't done anything wrong." We can see a lot of self-esteem here, but little self-awareness.

- William Kilpatrick, "Faith & Therapy" First Things, February 1999, p. 23

My point is this. Just as much as Judah felt good about themselves and what they were doing, we do the same. In a sense, “We haven’t done anything wrong” and yet God sees things differently! Look at our nation and how very comfortable they are in the sin they are living in and what is even worse, those that say they love the Lord are just as sinful, they are doing just as much evil as those that reject the Lord! The One who has saved them from their sin is cast aside and they are once again in bondage to sin! Paul Tournier, who is a Swiss psychiatrist, made these observations, “A diffuse and vague guilt feeling kills the personality, whereas the conviction of sin gives life to it.”

We would rarely hear teachers speak like this today! In fact many don’t even teach verse by verse through the Bible, they avoid the issue of sin and they avoid passages like this, “**Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward.**” Isaiah 1:4. This is a sad statement to be made against anyone and God said this to His people. They were sinful, full of iniquity, breeding evildoers, corrupt and they have turned their backs on God.

Remember what I said that before Isaiah or really God speaking through Isaiah brings us to the Savior he shows us our sin and that is exactly what he is doing here with Judah! Listen to what he says as he continues on in this rebuke or really God rebuking the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their sin, for their turning from the One who birthed this nation!

VERSES 5-9

1. Here we see in these verses Isaiah give to us two images showing us how clueless we can be to what God is doing, what He is showing us about our condition. You see, because of their actions, God's wrath is going to be poured out upon them. And God is lamenting the fact that His people are beyond chastening. The nation is sick, their minds are filled with wickedness and their whole heart is far from God and they don't even see it!

2. And this first image is given to us in Isaiah 1:5-6 as he gives to us a picture of a man who is so beaten there is not one place on his body that is not sore, that is not bruised, that is not bleeding! He does not even recognize his condition and he keeps taken more of this judgment of God upon his life. His condition is only getting worse because he refuses to turn back to God! And I think it gets to the point where many feel this is just the way it is, not recognizing that God has so much better things for you! Judah missed it and I think many times so do we!

Look at the church in general today. We see the acceptance of homosexual marriages, homosexuals in the ministry, the rejection of God's Word, the acceptance of all kinds of immoral lifestyles, and-so-on. And the problem that arises out of this condition is judgment will eventually come, as the Southern Kingdom of Judah would find out shortly!

3. The second picture is found in Isaiah 1:7-8 and what we see here is a city that has been invaded, destroyed and yet they don't even see what has happened, they are blinded to it! And instead of living in mansions you might say, God's people are living in shacks in the midst of a field that has been picked over by invading thieves! Not a pretty picture nor is it intended to be!

And look at our nation, where we are at today and we are living in shacks you might say, the nation is falling apart, we are owned by other nations, like China and most Americans don't even see it. God has brought us to this place of repentance and we are refusing to look up and repent of our sins.

4. But our God is gracious and merciful and as verse 9 tells us, He has a remnant of faithful people, people who love Him because if there were none, we would be like Sodom and Gomorrah! Like Judah, if it was not for God we would deserve what they received because we are no different! The only reason why we are here, the only reason why the Church is here is because God saves sinners!

And keep in mind that Isaiah is trying to convict the nation of their sins and God is doing the same with us so that we may turn to Him. As one writer put it, "The only conviction of sin that ends up healing us is when we see how we have despised and forsaken the very One who died to save us. Conviction of that super-sin opens up healing for all our other sins."

#### VERSES 10-15

1. Remember back in Isaiah 1:9 that Isaiah said that the Southern Kingdom of Judah was like Sodom and Gomorrah. But now, here in verse 10 he says that they are not "like" Sodom and Gomorrah but they are Sodom and Gomorrah! God is obviously trying to get the attention of the leaders and people of Judah by associating them with two cities synonymous with sin and judgment.



We are no different today, we water down sin, we sugar coat sin, we don't call sin "sin" anymore. Or even worse, it is not our fault it is someone else's fault or we were born that way. Get real, sin is sin and it is an abomination before God. Jesus did not come to free us from our food addictions or our frailties; He came to set us free from our sin!

I think our nation can be likened to Sodom and Gomorrah as well. What can we do about it? Like Isaiah told Judah, get back to the Word of God, apply the Word of God to our lives for it will direct us down the right path.

2. In Isaiah 1:11-15 we see all the religious activity that they were involved in. They offered sacrifice to God, celebrated the feast days, prayed before God, they were doing all the things that God required of them, outwardly speaking. And God is saying He has had plenty of this garbage and does not want them to do these empty works any longer.

You see, their heart was far from God. And this is a very dangerous place to be for it makes people feel very comfortable, they have a false assurance, and God says, "I don't even know you!" In fact, that phrase, "**I have had enough**" is translated in The New Living Translation like this, "I am sick of your sacrifices."

And notice that it also says of Judah regarding what they were doing, "**your sacrifices to Me.**" Why would God say that when God instituted these sacrifices? Because they were doing these things according to their own will, their own desires and worship is not about us at all, it is all about God and our hearts need to be right with Him! We are drawing near to God not doing some kind of empty ritual and thinking by doing this we are okay with God!

And how sobering of a thought that truly is! We can offer God all kinds of religious rituals and ceremonies, all kinds of religious service, and *He may hate it and consider it an abomination!* And don't think we are any different. We look at our church attendance, putting money in the offering plate, singing some songs, praying and in the end it is empty if our heart is not changed, if we are not surrendered to Him. Make no mistake about it, without the right heart God *hated* their religious ceremony and service! Look at how we come before Him in these emergent churches, these seeker friendly churches, these purpose driven churches and-so-on. We must worship in Spirit and in truth and if you move away from God's Word you are not worshiping in Spirit and truth, it is an empty worship.

3. Things were so bad that God basically told them, "Enough is enough! I'm not going to hear your prayers any longer." It is as Micah 3:4 said, "**Then they will cry to the LORD, But He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, Because they have been evil in their deeds.**"

Also in Isaiah 59:1-2 we are told, "**Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.**" In other words, don't be fooled, God is not mocked. What you sow you will also reap! You can't say you love God and are serving Him if you are living like the Devil and that is exactly what Judah was doing!

VERSES 16-17

1. We have seen the problem, our heart is evil, sin has filled our lives. But how in the world can that be fixed? Isaiah says that we are to wash ourselves, clean up our lives, put away evil, stop doing evil, do good? Isaiah tells us but as you read through these verses it seems like Isaiah is speaking of a works salvation, that we need to do these things to be saved!

First of all that is inconsistent with Scripture and when we run into something like that then we are either not interpreting this portion of Scripture right or we don't have all the information. As we will see as we move on we are only cleansed by the shed blood of Christ. Then what is this all about? I think Isaiah is speaking of repenting before God and getting right with God and what God does on the inside will overflow in our actions, the things we do and the things we say!

You see, as God cleanses you inwardly then these will be the things that naturally flow from your life. You will hate evil and not follow down its path. You will do good and care for those in need. It is as James says, "**Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**" James 1:27. If God has not had an impact on your life then these things will not be natural to you. It is not a works salvation but a salvation that works!

2. As we move on we will see how this all comes together, how God wants to cleanse us. It is all about grace, the grace of God that He extends to us through faith!

VERSES 18-20

1. How crazy are people when they reject the love that God extends to them in Christ. It is just plain foolishness to reject Him and yet so many do today. Even in the wickedness that Judah was involved in God wants them to come to Him so He can cleanse them and make them as white as snow. No one is that bad that they can't be saved, the problem really is that they think they are too good and don't need to be saved.

Our solution in America and probably all over the world amounts to something like this and there is only one way that will save us but we try all the others because we do not want to submit to God. Listen carefully,

- Philosophy says: Think your way out.
- Indulgence says: Drink your way out.
- Politics says: Spend your way out.
- Science says: Invent your way out.
- Industry says: Work your way out.
- Communism says: Strike your way out.
- Fascism says: Bluff your way out.
- Militarism says: Fight your way out.
- ***Jesus Christ says: "I am the way (out) . . ."***

God wants us to think this over, to reason this out. We are sinners and our sin has separated us from God. God loves us so much that He has provided a way for us to have our sins removed from our lives so that we are as white as snow!

What is the requirement, what do we have to do? What you have to do is be “**willing**” to admit you are a sinner and come to Him asking Him to be your Savior and Lord. It is out of that repentance and receiving Christ that leads us to a life of obedience. The **LORD** offers a repentant, humbled Judah and us **true** and **complete** cleansing from sin. Our condition of sin can be transformed from deeply stained to completely white by applying the shed blood of Christ to our life by faith!

We are told in I John 1:7, “**But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**” It is only when we turn to Him, walk in the light, that He cleanses us.

You see, it’s not “Can God?” but “Are you willing?” God will not force Himself upon you. Notice God’s call to us in Matthew 11:28-30, “**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” Notice, it’s an invitation to come! The question is, “Are you willing?”

2. And in verse 20 Isaiah tells us that if you are not willing, if you refuse to come back to God, then you will be devoured not only by a physical enemy but by the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and you will be eternally separated from God enduring eternal punishment. Thus, as the Lord said, “**Come now, and let us reason together!**”

VERSES 21-23

1. At one time the city of Jerusalem was the center of worship and because of their love for God we see that justice and righteousness flowed from it. In Psalm 48 we read, **“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God, In His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, The joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, The city of the great King. God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge.”** Psalm 48:1-3.

The reason for this was their love for the Lord and their obedience to Him as I have said. They walked in the light as He is in the light and God blessed them. But now, this once glorious city was a place of spiritual harlotry. Their worship of God was corrupted and now it affected their judicial system. The poor, the defenseless could not get a fair hearing, only the rich could buy their way out, even if they were guilty.

In fact, the Jewish paraphrase of the Old Testament called Targum puts verse 23 like this, “All of them love to accept a bribe, saying – a man to his neighbor – ‘Assist me in my case, so that I will repay you in your case.’” In other words, “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine” and because of man’s heart being evil, wickedness grows!

And just look at this nation and how we have turned our backs on God and our own judicial system has been affected by our actions. Because of that we are reaping what we have sown. Because of the spiritual adultery, all of our outward actions have been affected, we are Sodom and Gomorrah!

VERSE 24-25

1. God is calling His people “**adversaries**” and “**enemies**” and will purge them and judge them for their actions. Is God going to wipe out the Jewish people? Is God going to destroy them for good? What is the purpose of this judgment? We do not have to guess because Isaiah is going to show us but he does give us a clue in verse 25 when he says, “**And thoroughly purge away your dross.**” That can be translated that He is going to “refine with lye.”

In other words, all those stains that you have, those scarlet and crimson stains that you can't remove from your life, God is saying that He has super strength industrial cleaner to remove those deep, those longstanding stains of sin in your life. Yes God will judge those who refuse to come to Him, but for those that do turn back to Him He will refine them in the refiner's fire. How do I know that for sure? Let's read on and you will see!

VERSES 26-31

1. Notice the restoration that God speaks of regarding Judah and the Jewish people. The judges will be restored to where they were in the beginning as well as the counselors. And the city of Jerusalem will once again be known as a city of righteousness, it will be known as a faithful city!

And in verse 27 it says, “**Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her penitents [those who repent] with righteousness.**” This is something that is very important for us to understand! God does not redeem us in such a way that His standards, His righteousness, His justice, His holiness is swept away.

Make no mistake about it, apart from the cross all we can hope for is death and with that will come the judgment of God. You see, God cannot forgive sin apart from their being payment for our sin. The redemption that God extends to us is not because of God being lenient but by his justice and righteousness being fully satisfied in Christ. God's redemption and restoration are always done with justice and righteousness. He never saves or redeems at the expense of His justice and righteousness.

Paul reminds us of this in Titus 2:11-14, "**For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**"

Jesus was that perfect substitute, He is our Kinsman redeemer who paid in full the debt of our sin and endured the punishment that was due us. I don't think we will ever fully understand the cost that was paid by Jesus to cleanse us from our sins but apart from it we are still dead in our trespasses and sins! It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, "**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"

What do we need to do? Again, verse 27 tells us, "**Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her penitents [those who repent] with righteousness.**" In other words, our part is to repent of our sins! That means we turn from the direction we are going and we turn towards Christ because He tells us, "**. . . 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'**" John 14:6.



2. But for those who refuse to repent, those who **“forsake the LORD shall be consumed.”**

Isaiah 1:27. And when Isaiah speaks of the terebinth trees please understand that these trees were used in pagan worship, this is speaking of the groves. And these pagan practices of worship were nothing more than sexual orgies before these trees that were cut into phallic symbols. And God is warning them that if this is what they desire then you will be embarrassed because they will not be able to save you, only He can!

3. Next time as we move into Isaiah chapter 2 we will see this day when righteousness will fill the land. God will deal with the ungodly, those living in rebellion to Him and try to draw them back to Him. But if they refuse, judgment is coming.

Remember that we need that conviction of sin in our lives because it leads us to repentance and redemption! Apart from the conviction of sin there will be no repentance and thus, no redemption. That means the knowledge of sin is not bad because it leads us to our Savior, it leads us to Jesus!

As I close this evening let me leave you with these words from Everett F. Harrison who wrote,

No word in the Christian vocabulary deserves to be held more precious than Redeemer, for even more than Savior it reminds the child of God that his salvation has been purchased at a great and personal cost, for the Lord has given himself for our sins in order to deliver us from them.

- Cf. Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 919