

The Prophecy of Isaiah
A Volunteer for God's Work

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." Isaiah 6:8

We are doing a wide-scope study of Isaiah, taking two or more chapters at a time.

In chapters 1-4 Isaiah prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem and warns of the judgment that is due to the people and he gives the reasons that God is going to send judgment upon them.

As Brother Gables pointed out this judgment is an invasion by an enemy and not so much final punishment. Although, it would seem to be true that unless these people repent, eternal hell will immediately follow their overthrow and death.

The reasons given for their judgment:

They are more stupid than oxen and donkeys because these animals know where their food comes from but Judah does not appreciate the blessings that come from God.

The people deal corruptly with the oppressed.

Their practice of religion has become empty of any spiritual meaning.

The city of Jerusalem has become a whore. The leaders are taking bribes.

Their rulers are like infants.

The land is full of idols.

The men are full of pride and the women strut about in their finery. All of this outward display of wealth will be taken away.

The loss of male inhabitants will be so great that seven desperate women will take hold of one man in order to remove the reproach of being unmarried.

Isaiah 5-6

God chose a people and brought them out of bondage in Egypt and established them in the land of Canaan. Before they entered Canaan Moses reminded the people that it was God's sovereign choice that determined their being the people of God.

Deut 7:6-11

⁶For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. ¹¹You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

God sent prophets to them so they were able to know the will of God. By the time of Isaiah much of God's Word was in written form so they had no excuse not to know what God required of them.

But, there always seems to be a "but," despite these great advantages the people refused to submit to the only true God. They worshipped idols and despised God's messengers. Those who would not repent will suffer a just punishment.

The contrast of Isaiah's obedience to the hardness of the majority of the people is remarkable [6:8]. God will always have a witness.

Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

² He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
and he looked for it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard,
that I have not done in it?
When I looked for it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

⁵ And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

⁶ I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and briars and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!

Isaiah made a shift from a direct, “thus saith the Lord” to singing a love song, a lament or a parable, about God’s vineyard. Several places in the Old Testament refer to God’s people as His vineyard.

The Husbandman of a vineyard carefully prepares the soil and provides everything for a fruitful harvest. The harvest of grapes should have been sweet but the fruit was bitter [1-2].

God calls on the people of Jerusalem and Judah to judge between Him and His vineyard. Was it reasonable for the Owner of the vineyard to expect a harvest of sweet grapes [3-4]?

Consequently, the Owner of the vineyard declares that He will remove the hedge and the vineyard will be trampled down by enemies and left to ruins [5].

The once lush and cultivated vineyard would become a wasteland, a desert, overrun by briars and thorns; instead of rain there will be a drought [6].

Verse 7 clearly gives the meaning of the love song about the vineyard. Instead of the sweetness of justice, there is bitter fruit of bloodshed and corruption.

Judgment upon Greed

Isaiah 5:8-10

⁸ Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.

⁹ The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
"Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.

¹⁰ For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."

Bath

— a Hebrew liquid measure, the tenth part of an homer. It contained 8 gallons 3 quarts of our measure. "Ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath" denotes great unproductiveness.

Ephah

Ephah, a word of Egyptian origin, meaning measure; a grain measure containing "three seahs or ten omers," and equivalent to the bath for liquids

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The problem here is the greedy landowners who extend their holdings at the expense of the poor. No matter how much property they had they wanted more. Their greed caused them to ignore the laws of God concerning the poor.

The resulting judgment will be that the large and beautiful houses of the wicked rich will be left empty with no one to care for them. In spite of their greed all of the land they amassed, their wealth will not increase.

Judgment for Drunkenness

Isaiah 5:11-17; 22-25

Isaiah 5: 11-17

- ¹¹ Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
that they may run after strong drink,
who tarry late into the evening
as wine inflames them!
- ¹² They have lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,
but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
or see the work of his hands.
- ¹³ Therefore my people go into exile
for lack of knowledge;
their honored men go hungry,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.
- ¹⁴ Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure,
and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down,
her revelers and he who exults in her.
- ¹⁵ Man is humbled, and each one is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are brought low.
- ¹⁶ But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.
- ¹⁷ Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture,
and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.

Isaiah 5: 22-25

- ²² Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine,
and valiant men in mixing strong drink,
- ²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of his right!
- ²⁴ Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.
- ²⁵ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them,
and the mountains quaked;
and their corpses were as refuse
in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

After denouncing greed Isaiah turns to drunkenness, especially among the leaders. The rich got up early to start drinking and they continued late into the night [11].

Isaiah describes them as “heroes at drinking wine and valiant men at mixing strong drink [22].

They were accomplished at injustice and corruption. They acquitted the guilty for a bribe and the innocent were deprived of fair judgment [23].

Because of their rejection of God and His laws the people will be exiled. The leaders will starve and suffer thirst [13].

There is a profound contrast between the shame of the people [14-15] and the glory of the Lord [16].

The once beautiful land will become pasture for sheep and nomads will dwell in the abandoned ruins [17].

The wrath of the Lord is seen in 24-25 as a brush fire; His hand strikes with earthquakes; dead bodies cover the streets as refuse.

Worldly Wisdom

Isaiah 5:18-21

¹⁸ Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood,
who draw sin as with cart ropes,
¹⁹ who say: "Let him be quick,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;
let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
and let it come, that we may know it!"
²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!
²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!

The final pronouncements are against those who arrogantly taunt God and jeer at His warnings of judgment. They are so caught up in their sin that they are described as being bound with cart ropes.

They are so far gone in the depths of sin that they can't tell good from evil.

In America today over 50 percent of children are born out of wedlock and we are told that is just fine.

Marriage is being defiled with "same-sex marriages."

Homosexuality is promoted on many TV shows and movies.

Abortion is "good."

How can you pray for America?

Lord, we will throw off all restraints and then ask You to protect us?

The only prayer that America can make is for repentance!

The Invasion is Coming

Isaiah 5:26-30

²⁶ He will raise a signal for nations afar off,
and whistle for them from the ends of the earth;
and behold, quickly, speedily they come!
²⁷ None is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a waistband is loose,
not a sandal strap broken;
²⁸ their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.
²⁹ Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey;
they carry it off, and none can rescue.
³⁰ They will growl over it on that day,
like the growling of the sea.
And if one looks to the land,
behold, darkness and distress;
and the light is darkened by its clouds.

Isaiah concludes this list of pending judgments by picturing the fall of Judah.

The day is coming when the troops of the enemy will come in like savage lions who roar at their prey before dragging them off to devour them.

Once the invasion starts there will be no stopping until justice is done and evil is overthrown.

Isaiah's Commission

The tone of Isaiah's message shifts from warnings of judgments to how he was called into the service of the Lord. While his countrymen rejected God, Isaiah was humbled and responded in faith.

Preparation for Service

Isaiah 6:1-7

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!"

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Isaiah is given a vision of the Lord seated on a throne in glory as both King and Judge of Creation. The apostle John writes that Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus Christ in this vision {John 12:41}.

The vision is of the throne and above it are seraphim {burning ones}, brilliant spiritual creatures who serve as God's attendants. They each have six wings: two of which covered their faces in reverence and awe; two wings cover their feet suggesting humility; and two allowed for perpetual flying, and always praising God, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts...."

As is always the case, when a sinful man realizes that he is in the presence of God, he acknowledges his sinfulness. Seeing that even the holy seraphim cover their faces Isaiah is struck with his own sinfulness.

Isaiah confessed his sin and his need to be cleansed and purged of sin. This is symbolized by the burning coal touching his mouth [lips]. With his sin atoned for and his sins forgiven he can now praise the Lord and declare God's glory to the people. The burning coal symbolized the power of God to purge and forgive sin.

The mouth was touched because it was the part to be used by the prophet when inaugurated. ...

And thine iniquity is taken away - implying conscious unworthiness of acting as God's messenger.

And thy sin purged - literally, covered; i.e., expiated, not by any physical effect of fire to cleanse from sin, but in relation to the altar-sacrifices, of which Messiah, who here commissions Isaiah, was in His death to be the antitype: it is implied hereby that it is only by sacrifice sin can be pardoned.

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Isaiah's Commission Affirmed

Isaiah 6:8-13

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." ⁹ And he said, "Go, and say to this people:

"Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive."

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull,
and their ears heavy,
and blind their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed."

¹¹ Then I said, "How long, O Lord?"
And he said:

"Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is a desolate waste,
¹² and the LORD removes people far away,
and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

¹³ And though a tenth remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak,
whose stump remains
when it is felled."

The holy seed is its stump.

“Here am I, send me.”

“Go and say to this people.”

Even though God is sending Isaiah, He tells Isaiah that the people will neither understand nor accept the truth. In fact, the preaching of Isaiah will result in the people hardening their hearts. Their spiritual hearing will be dulled and their spiritual vision will be clouded.

But Isaiah is to continue preaching until the land of Judah is devastated and abandoned and its inhabitants are taken into exile.

As discouraging as this must have been to Isaiah God gave him a hope that a remnant would survive the exile [13].

After the fact, we can see that this referred to the small number of the Jews who returned to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon.

The mention of terebinth and oak trees is to show that even though they may be cut down the stumps may sprout shoots and live again. Judah may be as good as dead but in mercy God will bring it back to life.