

A PERSONAL
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

ISAIAH

By

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

Isaiah = "The Lord saves"

Vision = a sight (mentally), i.e. a dream, revelation, or oracle:—vision.

"Isaiah, the son of Amoz" – God chose a specific person at a specific point in time for a specific ministry--to serve as His mouthpiece to Judah, the southern kingdom, and Jerusalem. Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of four kings of Judah: These are the general dates for the reigns of these kings. They are up for debate, but I am using the dates from Archbishop Ussher's "The Annals of the World."

1. **Uzziah** (810-759 BC) – Also known as Azariah. His reign was basically peaceful. He contracted leprosy after usurping the position of the priest in the temple. **2Kings 15:1-4** *In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.*
2. **Jotham** (759-742 BC) – **2Kings 15:32-35** *In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD.*
3. **Ahaz** (742-726 BC) - **2Kings 16:1-4** *In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.*
4. **Hezekiah** (726-695 BC) - **2Kings 18:1-5** *Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen*

serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

An interesting historical fact I found at www.cbsnews.com last year (December 2015): "The royal seal of an ancient biblical king has been unearthed near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

The seal, a clay impression depicting a two-winged sun with two ankh symbols on either side, was once used to seal papyrus documents associated with King Hezekiah, who ruled the kingdom of Judea from 727 B.C. to 698 B.C. The seal was unearthed in a trash heap near the walls of the ancient Temple Mount.

'Although seal impressions bearing King Hezekiah's name have already been known from the antiquities market since the middle of the 1990s -- some with a winged scarab (dung beetle) symbol and others with a winged sun -- this is the first time that a seal impression of an Israelite or Judean king has ever come to light in a scientific archaeological excavation," Eilat Mazar, an archaeologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who led the excavations, said in a statement.'

Is. 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

As Isaiah begins to speak, he calls out for the heavens and earth to be witnesses to his message from YHWH, the Lord.

Through Isaiah the LORD declared that He had nourished and brought up children (the nation of Israel). He had caused them to grow great in number, provided for them, cherished them and comforted them. He had given them a position of honor among the nations of the earth as His chosen nation.

What thanks did He get? They rebelled against Him and chose to ignore His authority over them.

Is. 1:3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Now Isaiah makes a pretty pointed comparison. Even an ox can recognize its owner and an ass can recognize its own stall, but Israel did not recognize their God as their sovereign authority and provider. They didn't understand; they were not very perceptive or discerning. Why does Isaiah say this? Next verse.

Is. 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

“Ah sinful nation” – According to the Hebrew, this seems to be equating Israel with a heathen /Gentile nation.

Laden – kaded = heavy; figuratively in a good sense (numerous) or in a bad sense (severe, difficult, stupid):—(so) great, grievous, hard(-ened), (too) heavy(-ier), laden, much, slow, sore, thick.

Iniquity – avon, avown = perversity, i.e. (moral) evil:—fault, iniquity, mischief.

Seed – zera = plant or posterity

Evildoers –ra’a’ = properly, to spoil (literally, by breaking to pieces); figuratively, to make (or be) good for nothing, i.e. bad (physically, socially or morally).

Basically, the Lord is saying through Isaiah that Israel has become a wicked, amoral nation that is producing children destined for destruction. Why?

- 1) They have forsaken (withdrawn from, rejected) the LORD.
- 2) They have provoked (scorned, blasphemed) the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.
- 3) They have “gone away backward”; the Hebrew refers to committing spiritual adultery.

Is. 1:5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

Why do you continue to be struck? Because you continue to rebel. The head references the part of the body that controls you, and the heart references the part of the body that is the center of your desires, feelings and understanding. The Hebrew for *head* included a reference to the priests. Maybe emphasis is being made that the spiritual leaders of the nation are spiritually sick/diseased; and as a result, the *heart* of the nation, the people, are sick/diseased as well as evidenced by their actions and desires.

Sad to say, I think that is becoming an ever more correct diagnosis of the “church” today. More and more “spiritual leaders” are corrupt and leading the “church” away from the truth of God’s word.

Is. 1:6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*

The whole nation is declared sick. It is a nation of wounds; its reputation has been injured/damaged. It is *bruised*; the Hebrew indicates bound together by means of spells/charms—idols, false religions. It has putrifying sores, new wounds of evil that are causing spiritual rot. These injuries have not been treated in any way to help promote spiritual healing.

Is. 1:7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

The land of the country has been ruined and made desolate. The cities have been burned with fire. The land has been taken over and ruined by strangers. The Hebrew for the word *strangers* implies one who commits adultery. Maybe the Lord is saying here that the land is being judged because of the spiritual adultery being practiced by the people of Israel—their decision to reject God and His commands and turn to serving idols.

Is. 1:8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

It was interesting that the Hebrew for the word *daughter* included “apple of the eye.” There are other places in scripture where God refers to the nation of Israel as the apple of His eye. Zion, of course, is Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah and the combined kingdoms.

Deuteronomy 32:9-10 For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Zechariah 2:7-8 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

I’ve been taught that Hebrew poetry is different from ours in that one of the ways it is expressed is through repetition or restatement. I think that is what is happening in this verse. He is comparing Judah/Jerusalem to a cottage in a vineyard and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers and a besieged city. After looking at the Hebrew for all these phrases, it was the “besieged city” that stood out to me. It indicates being concealed or hidden. The words for *cottage* and *lodge* both included the idea of a hut as part of a vineyard or garden, which would fit in with the idea of *hidden* to me. It’s like saying that instead of the beautiful ruling city/kingdom abundant in the blessings of God it was meant to be, it has become a speck in the land of the Bible.

Is. 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Isaiah reminds the people that the fact that there is a remnant at all left is due to God, The LORD of *hosts*. (I believe *hosts* is a reference to His heavenly army of angels.) I think the word *remnant* is key. A remnant is something left over from the original source. I think it is referring to the remaining few in Judah that still served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The next statement makes me think about Abraham’s conversation with the Lord regarding sparing Sodom if there be ten righteous found in the city (Genesis 18).

Lot was the only righteous man found, and Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Evidently, there were enough righteous men left in Judah/Jerusalem to cause God to spare them the same fate as those wicked cities.

Is. 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

Still, the comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah is made because of the overall wickedness of the people. Now God directs His message to the rulers and leaders in Judah/Jerusalem. Again, use is made of poetic restatement. Isaiah is making reference to the LORD....."our" God. He is still the God of Israel whether they recognize Him as such or not (because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

Is. 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Evidently, the people were still going through the ritual of offering many sacrifices to the Lord. God is recognizing those sacrifices as just that—ritual with no heart attitude of obedience to Him motivating their actions. God takes no delight in the senseless slaughter of animals in ritual. (This makes me think of people who go to church and participate in a given type of service thinking that they have pleased God in the process. They are going through the motions with no real heart motivation or participation involved.)

Is. 1:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

Tread – ramac = to tread upon (as a potter, in walking or abusively):—oppressor, stamp upon, trample (under feet), tread (down, upon).

The Lord is asking who has told them to present themselves at His house in such an abusive and disgusting manner.

Is. 1:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Is. 1:14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*.

The Lord is saying that He doesn't want anymore of their evil and deceitful offerings and sacrifices. Their ritualistic offering of what was intended to be "sweet incense" before God is disgusting to Him. In fact, He considers it sinful.

The "new moons" were times of festival and the Sabbaths were times of rest. "Assemblies" were public gatherings that usually included the reading of scripture. The Lord is saying that He is fed up with their going through these religious rituals with no focus or integrity of heart toward the One whom they

were to honor. He cannot endure their empty rituals; He hates them; He is weary of them.

It's obvious you are going through the motions of a ritual when your life testifies of no respect for the God you profess to be honoring.

Is. 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

I again think Isaiah is using Hebrew poetic style. To spread forth your hands was often associated with praise and prayer to God. The Lord is saying I am not going to acknowledge your prayers in any way. Why? He sees their hands (and hearts); they are guilty of shedding of innocent blood—not only from the ritualistic killing of many animals, but also from sacrificing their children to Molech.

Their praise is false; it is just for show. Their prayers are made from hearts of disobedience that have rejected God as Lord.

Is. 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Is. 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah is conveying God's message that the people need to cleanse themselves, physically and spiritually. The word *clean* carries with it the idea of being innocent, clear and pure. He wants them to stop performing evil acts.

"before mine eyes" - Isaiah is reminding them that God sees everything they do.

"Learn to do well" - I thought the Hebrew for the word *learn* was interesting—to goad, i.e. (by implication) to teach (the rod being an Oriental incentive). The Hebrew for *well* included the idea of being accepted. In other words it is going to take great effort to learn to do the right things, things that are acceptable before the Lord.

"seek judgment" – The Hebrew for the word *seek* included the idea of pursuit and worship. I think Isaiah is telling the people to pursue through worship a judgment of worthiness and right standing before God.

"relieve the oppressed" – Raise up to right again one who has fallen or carried a burden because of injustice or cruelty.

"judge the fatherless" – I think the word *defend* would have been a better choice than *judge* of the options given in the Hebrew. In other words, take care of orphans.

"plead for the widow" – Again, I think the word *defend* would have been a better choice from the Hebrew for *plead*. It was interesting that the word for widow

included those who had been divorced. In other words, take care of women who have lost their husbands (protector, provider) through death or divorce.

Isaiah's message echoes that given by Moses.

Exodus 22:21–23 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry....

Deuteronomy 27:19 Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow.

Is. 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

“Come now,” let’s start walking in the right direction. “Let us reason together”; let Me correct you, chasten you, plead with you (all choices from the Hebrew). You haven’t passed the point of no return; forgiveness is available. Isaiah is basically saying that no matter how obvious your sins are, no matter how bloody your hands may be, you can again be declared pure and clean before God. How?

Is. 1:19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

All you have to do is be submissive to the LORD God and willingly obey His commands. Submissiveness and obedience will result in your experiencing the best that this life has to offer.

We are used to thinking of submission and obedience in reference to earthly masters who are not always loving, righteous, and holy. We don’t readily accept submission and obedience as attitudes and actions that are purely for our well-being. All of God’s commands and desires for us are for our benefit.

Reminder: The Old Testament is rooted in the law—the New Testament in grace through faith in Jesus. A person with true faith will strive to obey.

Is. 1:20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

The contrast—If you choose to disobey Me, you will be devoured/consumed with the *sword*, which in the Hebrew includes the idea of drought. Again, we are reminded that these are the words of the Lord.

Is. 1:21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

Faithful = includes “to build up or support; to foster as a parent or nurse.”

City = includes “in the sense of flooring”

I think this is making reference to Jerusalem, the center of the spiritual foundation of the nation. The city once was a place in right standing with God and was permeated by morals, prosperity and justice. In Isaiah's day its people followed other gods, and it was filled with murderers. I think this includes a reference to the sacrifice of children that was part of the worship of these false gods? Is it a reference to the fact that because of the false teaching of the spiritual leaders, most of the people would be eternally damned?

I think it was, and I can't help but make comparisons to America today. Abortion is declared legal and the lives of the unborn are considered expendable. Multitudes of false teachers permeate the airwaves. The "church" is daily becoming more apathetic. We have lost our moral compass because we have turned from God to embrace the tenets of other religions as equal to His Word. There can only be one truth. By rejecting God's Word as the truth, we are destroying the foundations upon which the morals of our country were based.

Is. 1:22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

Is. 1:23 Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

One of the definitions Webster gave for *silver* was "anything having the luster or appearance of silver." *Dross* is waste matter or worthless matter. It would seem that the Lord is saying that what was once beautiful and glorious about this city / kingdom has been lost; it is now a spiritual wasteland. Both worthless silver and watered down wine paint a picture of something that was once valuable and prized becoming worthless and impure.

The leaders of the people had become corrupt; they had become companions of thieves and deceivers. They loved to get bribes and persecuted to get them. They weren't taking care of the fatherless or the widows (cf verse 17). In other words, they were seeking to please themselves and cared less how it affected the people.

Sad to say, this sounds all too familiar and is becoming more descriptive of American leaders every year.

Is. 1:24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

Is. 1:25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

Is. 1:26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

"ease" – to avenge (oneself)

Now comes a word of judgment seasoned with hope from the prophet's mouth from the LORD, YHWH, the self-existent, eternal God, the LORD of hosts (the angelic forces), the One who is the might and strength of Israel, the descendants of Jacob.

The Lord is going to get vengeance on those who oppose Him. The word *turn* in verse 25 makes reference to going back to the starting point. The Lord is going to bring His people back to the position of blessing that was theirs at their beginnings. He is going to remove all of their impurities (dross/tin).

Once again, God is going to give them leaders that are like their fathers of old. WHEN He does this, Jerusalem will again be called the city of righteousness, the city that nurtures its people in the ways of the Lord. (Obviously, this is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled.)

Is. 1:27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

“converts” = to turn back

When Messiah establishes His kingdom, Zion, Jerusalem, and her people will once again enjoy a right standing before God as she turns back to God in repentance because of the judgments He inflicts on her.

Is. 1:28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

These are two phrases saying basically the same thing. Those that choose to forsake the Lord, refuse to accept Him as LORD, those that rebel against His authority and who are found guilty of wrongdoing before Him, will be consumed (destroyed, made to perish).

Is. 1:29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

Oaks – ‘ayil = properly, strength; hence, anything strong; specifically a chief (politically); also a ram (from his strength); a pilaster (as a strong support); an oak or other strong tree:—mighty (man), lintel, oak, post, ram, tree.

Garden – gannah = a garden, the feminine form for the word meaning “fenced garden,” and derived from the word meaning to hedge about, protect, defend.

I think this verse is saying that when the nation returns to the Lord, they will be ashamed of the leaders they had chosen to rule them and the people they had chosen to protect them. They put their faith in the weak people and things of the world rather than trusting Almighty God.

Is. 1:30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

Isaiah now uses the normal meanings of the words to paint a picture of the preceding verse. They will recognize that as a people they had been like a mighty oak tree that had lost its magnificence as evidenced by the withering leaves; they had been like a garden that had lost its water supply. (This is in direct contrast to the godly man described in Psalm 1.)

Is. 1:31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench *them*.

The word picture continues. What they considered strong (their leaders; their idols) will be easily overthrown, and their works will kindle the fire of judgment that will result in the destruction of both; no one will be able to prevent it.