**The Book of Isaiah I**

**The Lord Is Salvation**

Isaiah 1:1 During the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah

740-690 BC Prophesied principally to Judah and Jerusalem (the southern kingdom).

Isaiah means “The Lord is Salvation.

Isaiah ministered to Judah during the time of the divided kingdom.

Fun fact: John Calvin (1530s) preached 342 consecutive sermons from Isaiah, without notes, preaching directly from the Hebrew and Greek text. For political reasons, he left Geneva in 1538. When he returned to the city in 1541, he continued from the same verse where he had left off.

He was a big fan of exegetical preaching. He railed against the preachers of his day who showed “contempt of Scripture… reading a verse from the Bible and preaching about something very different.”

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and, unlike his contemporary Micah of Moresheth, who was from the countryside, he was a man of the court and the city.

It is likely he was of royal lineage. He had access to the kings/court. An insider.

Outline of Isaiah that explains this dichotomy (that Isaiah was concerned about national issues):

Isaiah 1-39 Messiah the King Assyria

Isaiah 40-55 Messiah the Servant Babylon and Persia

Isaiah 56-66 Messiah the Conqueror The whole world

The themes of Isaiah are the themes of the Bible.

1. The sinfulness of Judah and Jerusalem

2. Appeal of God to turn to him—to repent.

3. Judgment if they do not.

4. The Messiah—the Suffering Servant—is coming to save.

5. Restoration of a Remnant

Isaiah is about faith in God’s promises. Faith in God’s promises, not in the world’s power/Assyria & Babylon. We will see that Ahaz was not faithful, but Hezekiah was.

Isaiah 1 Introduction to Isaiah. This chapter includes most of the themes of the entire book:

The utter sinfulness of Jerusalem/Judah (v 3-8)

Tender appeal by Jehovah that Judah repent (v. 16-19)

The inevitability of judgment (v. 24-25, 29-31)

The possibility of salvation (v. 26-27)

The chapter is like a courtroom scene, including witnesses, with Judah as defendant.

Isaiah 1:2-4

Hear me, you heavens! Listen earth! Isaiah is calling the heavens and the earth as witnesses to what God is telling Judah. Appealing to creation.

God: I have raised you and loved you like a parent does a child. I have always maintained *hesed*—covenant-love, loyal-love

Q: How has God been like a parent to us? Parallel: Hosea 11:1, 3-4.

I think about my grandchildren this weekend. I find everything they do charming and delightful. I treasure them. If they are hurt, it hurts me. I desperately want the best for them.

But we have rebelled. How have we rebelled? How have you rebelled?

“The ox knows his master” Even dumb animals are smart enough to know who is master.

Humans are the only ones of God’s creation that does not obey him.

A donkey knows its owner’s manger

Our equivalent: A dog knows where the food comes from.

Q: Why does Israel (and do we) not know our master? (don’t bite the hand that feeds you) We forgot where home is. (coming home theme)

Do you know your master? Do you hear his voice?

v. 3 The word “know” here is *yada* which is an intimate knowing used even of the sexual relationship (Genesis 2). Do you know God like this?

v. 3 My people do not understand “people” = *ammi* (as opposed to *lo ammi* in Hosea not God’s people). God still loves Israel and calls her his children in spite of it all.

BTW Isaiah 1:4 in NIV is woe, but better translated alas!

Q: If you were to interview the residents of Jerusalem, would they agree with the assessment in v. 4? Probably not. Who, me?

Whose guilt is great: Whose sin is a heavy load, weighing the down. Can you relate?

Implication: We are easily deceived about who our master is.

Isaiah 1:5-8 What do we see about God here?

We see his justice, but also his compassion. It breaks his heart to see Judah like this (Luke 13:34-35 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem… Again, it reminds of Hoseah 11:8 How can I give you up?)

Note: v. 7 was literally true. 701 BC

v. 8 Jerusalem, the beautiful city, is left poverty-stricken.

“The key to national prosperity is righteousness, not sound fiscal policy.” (Motyer)

God: You drove me to this.

Isaiah 1:9 Here we have hope. Q: Who are these “survivors”? a hard question…. These are the remnant, which is a common theme in Isaiah.

We are those survivors.

What is the normal meaning in everyday usage of the word remnant?

The remnant: Anchor Bible: “What is left of a community after it undergoes a disaster.

The remnant is the small portion of the religious people who truly worship God and will, therefore be saved from destruction.

 The Jews in Jerusalem are thinking they are just fine, but only a remnant of them will be saved. Application: Most who call themselves Christians are like these Jews. The remnant here are those who are saved from destruction, and they are a small minority.

I hope and pray that you/we are that remnant.

Isaiah 1:10-15 Why is God so angry? (He is, after all, calling us Sodom and Gomorrah)

What was the sin of Sodom? Ezekiel 16:49-51 Social injustice.

Didn’t he ask them to bring these offerings? (yes!). So what is the problem? (Malachi 3:10-12 bring in the whole offering, 1 Sam 15:22 to obey is “better” than to sacrifice Hos 6:6 I desire *hesed*, not sacrifice)

Being religious but not practicing *hesed* makes me sick!

v. 13 Might our worship be “worthless assemblies”?

So, what do we learn, then? What should we do?

Isaiah 1:16-17 Repent! What would we say we should do when we repent? Stop sinning, read the Bible and pray.

God says: Start behaving rightly toward the poor, the oppressed the orphan and the widow. Practice social justice. Do justice. Love me and act like me.

Isaiah 1:18-20. Come, let us reason together. Let’s have a conversation about this. God is willing to appeal to our reason.

Q: What does God offer? God offers salvation. Scarlet → white as snow.

What is required? That we are willing (ie choose freely) to obey

Two choices:

Willingly obey

Resist and rebel. What do you chose?

It comes down to this: Are you willing and are you obedient? Do you do the right things and do you WANT to do the right thing?

Skip to Isaiah 2

**Isaiah 2 The Mountain of the Lord** God gives us hope. (parallel to Micah 4:1-8)

Isaiah 2:1-5 A kingdom prophecy. “Concerning Judah and Jerusalem” here is both literal and symbolical of the kingdom of God. We are “Judah and Jerusalem.”

Vs 2. Last days, what last days? Hebrews 1:2 But in these last days…

Acts 2:17 “In the last days…” (quoting Joel 2:28-32)

What is the mountain of the Lord? It is Mt. Zion, it is Jerusalem, it is the Kingdom of God. It is the Church.

v. 3 The Law will go out from Zion. Pentecost and the early church?

v. 3 Many peoples… Genesis 22:18 Through you all nations will be blessed.

Vs 4. Is inscribed near the UN headquarters in New York. We can only hope….

What is the vision described here, how is it possible? God will bring peace and unity where there was war and division. This is the Kingdom of God. This is God’s vision. Do not hold your breath for the nations to do this.

v. 5 The precursor to “come let us go up to the mountain” (v. 3) is “Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Otherwise our evangelism will not produce “come let us go up.”

You and I need to “walk in the light of the Lord.” Then we can go up to the mountain.

A parallel kingdom passage: Isaiah 11:1-16.

11:1-3 A root (nazer) of Jesse. Matthew 2:23 He will be called *nazer*ene

Because of the sin of Israel and Judah (Isaiah 7), the royal kingship will become a stump.

But by God’s grace, from that stump will come a shoot/branch.

Isaiah 11:2 Note the mention of the Holy Spirit here. The Spirit is key.

11:4-5 Messiah will bring (social) justice (rightness, fairness) and righteousness. The needy and the poor cared for.

11:6-9 A kingdom prophecy. A beautiful image of the kingdom. Already but not yet.

v. 8 Look at this metaphor!!! The infant will play near the cobra’s den. This is God’s vision for his Church, for his people, for his Kingdom.

11:10-16 The kingdom of God is a banner, a resting place, a gathered remnant, a highway to heaven.

v. 10 Jesus is our banner! People will rally to Jesus!

He is also our “resting place.” Our safe place.

v. 11 Again, we are that remnant. God is trying to reclaim a remnant from Assyria, Lower Egypt, Cush, Delano, Visalia, Porterville, from Tehachapi and even from Buttonwillow.

Will you be part of that process?

v. 16 Picture the highway for God’s remnant.

Isaiah Ch 2-4 starts with Isaiah 2:2-5 and ends with Isaiah 4:2-6 This section begins and ends with hope. Ch 2-4 is like a sandwich. (inclusio)

Isaiah 4:2-6 The return of the glory of the Lord to the kingdom.

v. 2 In that day (again 2:2) the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful.

v. 3-4 The remnant will be cleansed.

v. 5 The Shekinah—the glory of the Lord, the cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night—will be with the people.

Jesus came and tabernacled among us John 1:18 He tabernacled among us. We beheld his glory—the glory of the one and only Son of God.

Branch → Cleansing → Booth/dwelling→Glory

Summary:
The Lord is our salvation.

He has loved us like a father loves his children

But we rebelled

So God has disciplined us

He is preparing a remnant.

He is calling us into his kingdom. Jesus is our banner. He is our glory.

Will not have time:

Isaiah 5:1-30 “The Song of the Vineyard” An Old Testament Parable

Isaiah 5:1-7 God’s vineyard

Is 5:1-2 God created a vineyard and he loved the vineyard.

The vineyard was Israel and Judah (v. 7) in context, but for us it is the church.

v. 2 He cleared the land, took out the stones and added the choicest vines. That is what God has done for his church and even in your life. He created a life for us and gave us work to do.

v. 2 He set up a watchtower. God protects the church.

v. 2 He created a winepress. God gives us work to do, but expects a crop.

v. 4 What more could I have done for you, O church/O Israel and Judah?

v. 4 When I came to pick grapes, there were only bad grapes. How does God feel about this?

They spent more time arguing over doctrines and sitting on committees than sharing their faith and helping the poor.

So it will be destroyed, its wall broken down and it will be a wasteland (v. 5)

Isaiah 5:8-30 God calls them out for their sin.

Isaiah 5:8-13 They were seeking wealth at the expense of the poor—driving the poor off their land. v. 9 But their great houses will become desolate.

v. 13 Therefore, they will go into exile. They will not be part of God’s church.

Well, that is exactly what happened in 722 and 586 BC.

Isaiah 5:20-23 for example

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.

We need to keep calling sin sin. It is not “making love.” It is adultery.

It is not “boys will be boys.” It is pornography, orgies.

 -wise in their own eyes

 -drunkards “heroes at drinking wine” = calling evil good

 -injustice in the courts acquit the guilty and convict the innocent

Summary:
The Lord is our salvation.

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But we rebelled

So God disciplined us

He is preparing a remnant.

He is calling us into his kingdom.

He has entrusted us with his vineyard, so that we can produce the fruit of the kingdom.