

## If The Shoe Fits – Isaiah 1

Is 1 (p.566); As I said last week, it's a new ministry year, a new theme, and a new study in this book – touching on the highlights, and gleaning the truths for our lives  
One of which is the uniqueness of God; Hence our **Uncommon** theme from Is 46:9 – *I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me*  
That's about as uncommon as it gets; That was last week

This week is chapter 1; Where Isaiah starts by giving us the setting – time, place, etc  
Which is important to see if you're going to understand the message; So first of all . . .

### See the big picture (v1)

Which Isaiah frames in v1 – *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.*

Right off the bat he gives us the time/place of his writing, by identifying the kings of Judah; Most of whom were good, except for Ahaz . . .

But ruled in the midst of pagan cultures, where . . .

### • Pagan prophets abounded – that's the first part of the big picture

There were *many* people at that time who claimed to see things that others couldn't, and know things that others didn't; *Many* who spoke for their supposed gods  
So Isaiah's claim of a *vision* wouldn't have been out of the ordinary or noteworthy

What was and *is* out of the ordinary – is that what he said was true, and came true

In fact, that's one of the ways that God's prophets stood out in general – their prophecies came true; And that's the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the big picture; Pagan prophets abounded, but . . .

### • God's prophets stood out

Not only b/c their prophecies came true, but b/c they never proclaimed any God but Yahweh, and only preached faithfulness to *his* covenant – his commands, his promises  
It started with Abraham around 2000BC, and then Moses around 1450, then Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha

But it's the *writing prophets* as they are known, with whom we're *most* familiar

With 16 different books of the OT bearing their names, they preached and wrote from the mid-700's BC to the mid 400's; All in uni-speak regarding God and his covenant  
Which means they stood out

### • Isaiah was one of them

In fact, he stood out among *God's* prophets; Preaching for almost 60 years in the late 700's, he covered it all – warning, judgment, restoration, sin, salvation . . .  
You name it, he addressed it; And the NT writers often quoted and referred to him  
Especially his God-centered way of seeing and living, in the midst of a God-less society  
How appropriate don't you think? How applicable

Especially when you consider that the age was marked by peace and prosperity; At least during the *first* part of Isaiah's life (**Map – ESV Study p.1236**)  
Even though God's people were split into two nations, Israel in the north and Judah in the south – times were good

But, as is often the case with peace and prosperity, it led to complacency and moral decay

So much so, that the northern kingdom, Israel, formed an ungodly alliance with Syria, a country to the north – in hopes of warding off the A-ssyrians to the east  
They even attacked Judah to try to get them to join  
None of which *pleased* God, b/c they weren't *supposed* to form such alliances with godless people like the Syrians; And so began a time when . . .

### • Instability was the norm

Instability marked by 4 dates; The first is **735BC – Ungodly Alliance** I just mentioned

The second is **722BC – Assyrian Overthrow**; That's when God allowed the Assyrians to attack and destroy the northern kingdom of Israel, despite the alliance . . .

Leaving intact only Judah in the south; Just as Isaiah had prophesied (Is 7:16; 8:4)

But it wasn't long before they too were attacked, in 701BC (**701BC – Failed Attack**)

But unlike the northern kingdom, they trusted God and successfully fought it off

And then (**Map**), about 100 years later, the Babylonians overthrew Assyria, and eventually did the same with Judah; Demolishing the temple in Jerusalem . . .

And carrying God's people into captivity (**586BC – Babylonian Captivity**); Hence the Babylonian Captivity of 586; Once again, something that Isaiah foretold (Is 39)

So it's not hard to see that the time of peace, prosperity, and sin – gave way to unrest, war, and punishment; That's the big picture from v1 that I want you to see (**Summary**)

Beyond that, Isaiah wastes no time starting in v2 – pointing out the sin that would bring all this on, and urging them to return to the Lord

And it's just as applicable now as it was then; So let me just say it this way . . .

### If the shoe fits – wear it (v2-15, 21-23)

As we walk through this passage, if he touches a nerve, admit it; That was his purpose then, and it still is, now; Like when he says in v2-3 . . .

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth* [IOW everybody listen up]; *for the LORD has spoken: “Children have I reared and brought up* [speaking of his people], *but they have rebelled against me. [3] The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”*

God's like, hello; I poured myself into you, and out for you – and some of you don't get it  
Just like some of you don't get it; You don't know who owns you; You don't know who's Lord of your life

And you don't understand where your place of protection and provision is, your *master's crib* so to say – the shadow of the Almighty, his presence; You don't get it

And God's trying to get your attention w/ this text, to say that if the shoe fits – wear it

### • If you don't really know God – acknowledge it (v2-3)

That's where it *starts*; If you're walking around acting like you know *God*, but deep down you know *better* – you're in trouble; You're on thin ice

And the first step off, is to acknowledge it

And then in v4 Isaiah says – [4] *Ah, sinful nation* [an expression of frustration], *a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have*

*forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.* They're far from God  
They've turned their *back* on him, by turning their *face* toward sin; So much so they're laden with it; Weighed down by it; Dragging it around

Which I think Isaiah points out, for the purpose of getting us to confess it

• **If you're far from God – confess it (v4)**

Confess your estrangement; Confess your separation; Agree that it's true, and turn from the sin that's causing it; Third . . .

• **If you're sick of sin – stop it (v5-6)**

Literally; If you're sick b/c of your sin, and/or you're sick and tired of your sin . . .  
*Why will you still be struck down* [v5; Why are you still a glutton for punishment]? *Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint* [IOW you're not thinking clearly, and you're weak]. [6] *From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.*

Is that you? Are you in a bad way physically, or emotionally, or spiritually – b/c of ongoing poor choices? Do you feel like you're in a vicious cycle of sin-suffer-repent . . . Sin-suffer-repent, over and over again? Suffering the ill-effects over and over again?

If so, why do you keep doing it? If it causes you so much grief, and regret, and pain – why do you keep indulging? You don't have to; You don't  
Addiction or not, there's *power* in the blood; Temptation or not, there's *strength* in the Lord; Evil or not, there's *freedom* in Christ; And you *can* stop  
You can stop in the strength that he provides; But only if you're sick of it; 4<sup>th</sup>. . .

• **If you're desperate for fellowship – seek it (v7-9)**

That's v7-9 where he continues with even more consequences of sin, saying – *Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners* [probably referring to the Assyrian Overthrow of Israel, in 722]. [8] *And the daughter of Zion [Jerusalem] is left like a booth in a vineyard* [isolated], *like a lodge in a cucumber field* [alone], *like a besieged city* [under attack]. [So much so, that] [9] *If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah* [completely destroyed; non-existent].

Again, for the purpose of getting them to return to the Lord, here Isaiah points out their loneliness – overtaken and overshadowed by people who don't know the Lord  
That's the idea of *foreigners*; And some of u know that feeling all too well, don't you?  
Like in your workplace – you're lonely and isolated; Or at school; Or maybe even in your home as the only one who follows Christ

Whatever the case, if you're desperate for fellowship – seek it; Seek *God's* people  
Don't wait for them to come to you – go to them; Be a squeaky wheel  
Seek godly influences; You're not the only one, and there *is* relief for your loneliness

• Then he says in v10-15 – [10] *Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom* [not a compliment]! *Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah* [you wicked

sinners]! [11] *“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD [your acts of worship]; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats* [he's not nullifying the Law, just their hollow obedience; abiding by the letter without the heart].

[12] *“When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? [Who told you to profane my name and disrespect my worship?] [13] Bring no more vain offerings* [disingenuous sacrifices that your heart is not in]; *incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations* [formal meetings or assemblies] — *I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly* [I won't tolerate sin in the midst of worship, especially when you act like there is none]. [14] *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me* [your gatherings weigh me down]; *I am weary of bearing them.* [15] *When you spread you're your hands* [when you worship], *I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood* [you love violence – whether it's real, imaginary, in sports, or in life, you're covered in it].

I think I'm going to let that speak for itself, and just say this . . .

• **If your worship isn't genuine – change it (v10-15)**

B/c that's frightening; Individually, *and* as a church; Don't go there; And if you are, change it; Fast; B/c your prayers aren't being heard . . .

Your worship isn't being received, and God *hates* what you're doing; And finally . . .

• **If your life is a mess – admit it (v21-23)**

That's v21-23 where he adds one final rebuke, saying . . .

[21] *How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice!*  
*Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.* [22] *Your silver has become dross* [impure, tarnished], *your best wine mixed with water* [the best of what you've been given has become ugly and distasteful]. [23] *Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.*

We could leave this in the corporate realm, the cultural realm, and throw all *kinds* of stones these days couldn't we?

But how about bringing it to bear on your own life; B/c that's where culture starts  
And some of you are living in denial – you're rationalizing your sin, and making light of it; Leading a messed up life, and resulting in a life that's a mess

Is that you? If so, the first step toward cleaning it up, is to admit it; Admit it, and get help;  
Admit it, and make it right; Admit it, and return to God (**Summary**)  
If the shoe fits, wear it

And last . . .

**Come clean or suffer the consequences (v16-20, 24-31)**

Admitting your sin is one thing, coming clean is another; And he addresses it in 3 parts  
The first is v16 where God says – *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, [17] learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.*  
Come clean, and do what's right

And then he says more generally – [18] “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. [19] *If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; [20] but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*”

Fail to come clean, and you’ll suffer the consequences

But do so, and you’ll not only be *cleansed* – washed *white as snow* . . .

But you’ll reap the rewards – *you’ll eat of the good of the land*; You’ll enjoy the *blessings* of God; That’s the first part

- The second is found in v24-26, where Isaiah refers to the consequences of our sin and depravity, saying . . .

*Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. [25] I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross [your scum] as with lye [a chemical solvent] and remove all your alloy [your impurities]. I will do it*

Metaphors, to say in no uncertain terms, that God will remove sin from his people, by removing people in sin; True

He did it over and over again in the OT; He did it in the New, with Ananias and

Sapphira – taking their life for lying about their offering . . .

And some of those in Corinth who participated wrongly in The Lord’s Supper . . .

And he’s doing it now – protecting the purity of his church; To be completed when Christ returns; *I will turn my hand against you . . . and remove all your alloy*

[26] *And I will restore your judges as at the first [your good leaders], and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.*” Come clean and reap the rewards; Fail to do so, and suffer the consequences

- All of which he reiterates and sums up in v27-31; Saying – Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.  
Those who repent of their sins will be *redeemed* by righteousness – i.e. rescued and protected from the consequences of their sin, by God’s holiness  
[28] *But rebels and sinners shall be broken together [they’ll reap the consequences], and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed [as in suffer in the throes of hell].*

[29] *For they [the rebels and sinners] shall be ashamed [full of guilt] of the oaks that you desired [probably referring to the pagan rites of idol worship, sometimes made out of oak]; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen [possibly referring to their sexual sin; the “gardens” wherein they found pleasure].*

*For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers [he continues with the metaphor to say that sinners and rebels alike will waste away], and like a garden without water [lifeless]. [31] And the strong shall become tinder [like weak fire starting material], and his work a spark [in that his own sinful deeds will be the spark that seals his fate], and both of them [the sinner and his works] shall burn together, with none to quench them [an obvious reference to hell].*

All that so say – come clean, or suffer the consequences

The consequences of God’s *discipline* and loss of blessing for the *saint* who’s gone awry

And the consequences of God’s punishment, for the sinner (**Summary**)

- Either way, the message is the same – repent

Acknowledge your sin; Ask God to forgive you; And turn from it; Making a change where change is due

If the shoe fits, wear it, admit it; And come clean (Pray)

If I’ve been speaking to you, I’m going to give you a minute to do exactly that – to listen to the words of this song, repent of your sin, tell God you’re sorry, and come clean

Prayer – God, as we give of our *tithes and offerings* – find us doing so with a pure heart;

Thank you for your mercy; Thank you for your grace; Thank you for your forgiveness;

Thank you for your cleansing and renewal; Help us to break our bad habits; Help us to

stop our sin; Help us to change; We’re tired of being sick, and sick of being tired; We

want to reap the rewards, not the consequences; Find our hearts clean now, and our

worship real