

Holy Trinity Bible Study - Isaiah Lesson #2

Primary Sources:

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer

From the Jerusalem that is to the Zion that will be (1:2 – 2:5)

Chapter 1

The Wickedness of Judah

² Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, 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."

⁴ Ah, sinful nation, 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.

⁵ Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 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.

⁷ 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. ⁸ And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

⁹ If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. (**Romans 9:29**)

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; 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.

¹² "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?

¹³ Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations-- I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. ¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of

bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶ 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.

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."

The Unfaithful City

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, your best wine mixed with water. 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.

²⁴ 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 as with lye and remove all your alloy. ²⁶ And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."

²⁷ Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. ²⁸ But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. ²⁹ For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. ³⁰ For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. ³¹ And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.

Chapter 2

The Mountain of the Lord

¹ The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples;

and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Reading: **The Message of Isaiah** pages 41-46

Questions to Consider

1. What was God's intention for Israel? (Exodus 19:6)

God intends for Israel to be his adopted Children.

"The people of this city and nation were the LORD's own children and people" (2-3)
Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 41

Exodus 19:16 "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." *ESV*

Exodus 4:22-23 "²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'" *ESV*

"Exodus 4:22 reveals sonship as a redemption concept. Unlike contemporary pagans, who considered themselves children of their god by some quasi-physical act of begetting, Israel was the Lord's son by historical divine choice and by the exodus as a work of redemption. Redemption initiated a process of divine providential care. The picture of the attentive parent and the growing child covers the whole historical period from Exodus to Isaiah." Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 42

2. How is this notion of sonship carried forward to us?

Galatians 4:4-5 "⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." *ESV*

3. **What does Isaiah mean when he refers to “Holy One of Israel” in verse 4?** It is the divine title for God used by Isaiah to emphasize the nature of the relationship God intended between Himself and Israel and by adoption as son’s with ourselves.

“The Holy One of Israel may well have been coined by Isaiah as a title for the Lord to express the revelation granted to him in his inaugural vision. Holiness is the heart of the nature of God. Thus, in the full reality of all that makes him divine and marks him out as unique he had drawn near to and in a real sense become the possession of Israel, he was ‘Israel’s Holy One’.” Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 43

4. **How did Israel respond to God’s plan for them? (1:2-3)**

Isaiah 1:2-3 "Children have I reared and brought up, 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."

“Like headstrong, ungrateful children, they had rebelled against him, and already this rebellion had cost them dearly.” *Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 41*

5. **How is that response manifested? (1:4)** Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 43

- a. *They have become a Sinful Nation:* “The nation, intended to be distinct in holiness (Ex. 19:6), became (lit.) the ‘sinning nation’”
- b. *They are Laden with Iniquity:* “The people, redeemed and unique), became ‘heavy with iniquity’, as if the Lord who carried them (Ex. 19:4) himself felt the burden.” “’aôn (guilt/‘iniquity’) is sin as corruption of character and nature rather than an element in behavior.”
 - i. Deuteronomy 4:4-6⁴ But you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.⁵ See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.⁶ Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'
 - ii. 2 Samuel 7:23-24²³ And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods?²⁴ And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God.

- c. *They are Offspring of Evildoers:* Brood/‘seed’ is the word for Abrahamic descent but is traced here to a line of evildoers. Children/‘sons’ (cf. verse 2b) indicates the relationship of the redeemed to God (Ex. 4:22 *see above*) which was meant to issue in a distinctive life (Dt. 14:1–2) but is now manifested in corruption.
 - i. Deuteronomy 14:1-2¹ "You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead.
² For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
- d. *They are Utterly Estranged:* They were designed to be special as the unique nation and people, special to God as the ‘seed’ of Abraham and his very own ‘sons’ – and sin had ruined all! But the heart of this sinfulness is how they now stand in relation to the Lord. Only commitment to the Lord secures true values in life; when the commitment goes, values follow. To forsake the Lord is the opposite of to seek the Lord. Just as ‘seeking’ is not looking for him as though he were lost but showing a determination to be with him where he is to be found, so forsaking is deliberately distancing ourselves from him.

6. What does it mean to be estranged from God?

Question about Israel as a people and a nation but also a question for us personally.

7. What is the result of that estrangement for Israel? (1:5-7)

Isaiah 1:5-8⁵ Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.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.

⁷Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.⁸ And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

“None of the kings under whom Isaiah ministered were fools politically, economically or militarily. It is not, however, these factors which make for national well-being or security. For all their worldly wisdom, the country sickened unto death under them. The metaphors of the wounded man untended (6) and the land without defense (7) alike speak of the helplessness and hopelessness which forsaking the Lord brings. Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 44

8. How has God brought about correction?

God can use anything to bring about his plan. In this case he was using Judah’s enemies to bring about correction.

9. What is the meaning of verse 8?

“For these people the judgment of God was no mere theological abstraction, or something that existed somewhere else or might be experienced at some future time, as we tend to think of it. It was a very present, painful reality. The situation reflected here is probably the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib the Assyrian in 701 BC.” *Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 41*

10. Who is in control of the outcome? (1:9)

“The call to heaven and earth to listen in verse 2 serves two purposes. It underlines just how high the stakes are in this confrontation between the LORD and his people. In a very real sense the welfare of the entire universe depends now, as then, on how God’s people respond to his word. It also foreshadows the climax towards which the whole vision of Isaiah moves. For, as we have already seen, the word which God speaks to his people here is destined to have its final outworking in a new universe – new heavens and a new earth.” *The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 42*

“Into this situation where forsaking the Lord has brought the nation to the end of its tether, internally (6) and externally (7 – 8), comes the unmerited factor of divine preservation. There is a point at which the Lord sets his fence around his people and says ‘No’ to the consequences of sin and the power of the foe. Merit may call for an overthrow like Sodom (Gn. 19) but mercy determines on survival. The LORD Almighty represents two nouns in apposition, (lit.) ‘The LORD [who is] hosts’. In other words, to think of the Lord is to think of power and resource unbounded (‘hosts’ being a ‘plural of diversity’ and indicating ‘every sort of’. 4 Isaiah began his first discourse by emphasizing The LORD as the sovereign speaker (2); he rounds it off with an inclusio, an identical emphasis on the Lord as sovereign in mercy. Judge and Savior are one.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 44

11. What is God’s judgement on the religion as practiced by Judah and Israel? (1:11-15)

“Worship had been divorced from justice, and the fatherless and the widow had become the chief victims. Such disregard for justice was a fundamental violation of the Sinai covenant for which no amount of cultic observance could compensate. The exodus itself had flowed out of God’s concern for the oppressed, and from the very beginning he had demanded that his people should have a special concern for the poor and defenseless among them. Furthermore, it is a requirement which has been intensified rather than diminished under the new covenant within which we ourselves now stand. If proof is required we need look no further than Jesus’ parable of the good Samaritan.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 42

“Every religion has its necessary outward forms, and every religion is susceptible to the same danger of defining the reality in terms of the form. The expenditure of time (New Moons, Sabbaths, festivals, pilgrimages to Zion etc.) and money (bulls, lambs, goats etc.) which their religion required may have made them proportionately the more affronted that such exercises meant nothing to the God whom they thus thought to honor. “

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 45

12. How does this relate to Judaism as practiced by many in the time of Jesus, and Christianity as practiced today?

13. Was Isaiah calling on the people of Israel and Judah to abandon their traditional rites?

“The law was given so that those who were already the Lord’s people by redemption might know how to behave in ways acceptable to him who had redeemed them.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 45

14. Was he simply advocating morality without religion?

“No, but he was issuing a call to return to the primitive integration of the two elements of **ethics and rite**. In the Mosaic deposit, redemption (Ex. 12), the giving of the law (Ex. 20) and the institution of religious observance (Ex. 25:1 – Lv. 27:34) followed each other in that order.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 45

“Outside the context of the law of obedience the law of sacrifice had no utility. This remains the abiding message of the passage.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 45

15. Why does Isaiah relate the situation in Judah with that of Sodom and Gomorrah?

“It also magnifies God’s mercy which forebore to destroy his people altogether; but for that mercy they would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah (9). Here Isaiah says they are more than ‘like’, both rulers and people, are Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom (see 3:9) is used as a symbol of sin paraded, sin as an accepted life-style.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 46

16. How can the Lord so persistently reject their sacrifices? (1:12-15)

“The divine purpose in the sacrificial system is for his people to appear before [God] (Ex. 23:17; 34:23). [The idea is the] biblical and express the wonder of worship. All had, however, been reduced to a trampling of “my” courts, which may be a reference to the abundant animals brought for sacrifice or to the mere physical attendance of those who brought them.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 46

Exodus 23:17 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD.

Exodus 34:23 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel.

“Both intercessor and intercession are invalidated because your hands are full of blood/‘bloods’, i.e. deeds of blood-guiltiness.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 47

“If Isaiah were denying that the sacrifices as such lacked divine authorization he would not here describe the temple as my courts.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 46

“Isaiah is challenging current abuse not the validity of the sacrificial system as such. Hence he decries your festivals – the festivals as you practice them. They had replaced the principle of conformity to the will of God with the principle of practicing what was acceptable and helpful to themselves . 15 The topic is now intercession. This too means that Isaiah is criticizing not use but abuse for he would not denounce prayer as such.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 47

17. What does God call Judah and Israel to do? (1:16-17) (Exodus 12 & 20)

“Positive remedial action is now commanded beginning with a threefold command to get right with God.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 47

a. Make yourselves clean.

“*Take . . . out of my sight* indicates that the Lord’s appointed means of cleansing can be guaranteed to remove every uncleanness which he would otherwise see. Your evil deeds is ‘the evil of your doings’. The ‘doings’ themselves are past but their evil remains until removed by cleansing.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 47

b. Turn back to God

“The Lord gives three commands for the reordering of personal life. They are – decisive abandonment of the old life (*stop*), development of a new mind (*learn*) and setting new objectives and priorities (*seek*) conformed to the Lord’s stated will.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 47

c. Reform society

“This is the contrast between the two ends of imperfect society, the oppressor and the needy, the one inflicting and the other suffering the hurt. Isaiah looks for a transformed society wherever it needs transforming.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 47

18. What is the promise of God in verses 18 & 19?

God is offering a free pardon and the chance of a new life.

“Scarlet and red are the colors of blood-guilt. The Lord applies the remedy where he discerns the need. The structure of the context requires us to take they shall be as white as snow as a promise not as an ironic question.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 48

“But at the very point when judgment is expected, grace intervenes. The divine judge reasons with the accused, and makes an offer which is truly amazing in its generosity: nothing less than total pardon (18)! What they had wrongly tried to achieve by cultic manipulation is now offered to them freely...

It did not require the suffering of the exile to make it possible. It was always possible if

only the people would repent. But grace is always hard for rebels to understand; their view of God is too small.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 43

“Isaiah will often later insist that the Lord’s forgiveness accords with legal requirement... The Lord’s promise is not only to deal with the stain of sin but with the nature from which it springs.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 48

19. What does God call then to do first?

To be willing and obedient.

“Obedience is not salvation by works. The first obedience is to the command to wash (16) and to come (18), and only thereafter are they to obey in a life conformed to the law of God. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken is a direct attribution of Isaiah’s word to the Lord himself.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 48

20. How will the Lord’s judgment be executed? (1:20)

Through the sword delivered by their enemies.’

21. What is God’s judgement on Jerusalem? (1:21)

22. How does sin act on the nation? (1:22-23)

23. How will God deal with the faithless city? (1:24-25)

24. Why does God deal so harshly with the city?

25. What is the ultimate promise of God? (1:26) (2 Samuel 5:6-9 & 7) (Psalm 89)

26. What are the moral grounds of redemption and judgement? (1:27-28)

27. What is the ultimate result of false religion? (1:29-31)

28. What do verses 2:2-4 represent?

29. What is Isaiah’s call after the song presented above? (2:5)