

## **1:1 Isaiah**

The book of Isaiah was written by a man named Isaiah. He was a prophet of God whose ministry spanned about 60 years. He was around when the Jews had two nations, Israel and Judah, and continued in ministry another forty years after the Assyrians carried off the northern kingdom of Israel.

This period of time in the Jews' history is well documented in the books of Kings and Chronicles. As a matter of fact, Isaiah doesn't just tell us about things, but he also shows up as a major player in these books.

2Kings 19 and 20 tells us about Isaiah's interactions with King Hezekiah. 2Chronicles 26 tells us to refer to Isaiah's writings for more about King Uzziah (2Chron. 26:22).

Isaiah's writings are so vitally important that we see him quoted in the New Testament by John The Baptist, Matthew, Jesus, Mark, John, and Paul. He is quoted more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament prophet.

In a lot of commentaries, you will read of someone mentioning "second Isaiah," or "deutero-Isaiah." This is because the first 39 chapters of Isaiah's book seem markedly different than the final 27 chapters. As a result, many "scholars" have arrived at the conclusion that there were actually two different men writing under the name of Isaiah.

In fact, we have it on very good authority that there was only one. In the gospel of John, we read of Jesus,

**John 12:37-41 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM." These things**

## **Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.**

Two different quotes from the book of Isaiah: the first from Isaiah 53, the second from Isaiah 6. But both are attributed by John to the same man. So, when I see "deutero-Isaiah or "second Isaiah" being referred to in a commentary, I pitch the book in the trash.

Isaiah was a family man. His wife was a prophetess (Isa. 8:3), and they had at least two sons (7:3; 8:3). But his life was far from typical. God gave him visions (Isa.1:1), spoke to him (Isa. 7:3), showed him oracles (Isa. 13:1), and was called "My servant" by the Lord (Isa. 20:3).

One of those communications from God makes up chapter one...

### **1:2-4 Revolting Sons**

God wants to draw everyone's attention to what has been happening. All of the heavens and earth are told to listen: God has ungrateful kids. They have revolted against Him. Like rebelling teenagers, Israel had bailed out on the Lord. This kind of offensive behavior is not even found in dumb animals like oxen and donkeys.

They are dumber than dumb animals because they are weighed down with iniquity. As a result, they don't know or understand. Thomas Aquinas said in the 1200's, "Concupiscence (con-QUE-pis-ence) darkens the intellect." In plain English, that is, "Sin makes you stupid." Only sin-induced stupidity can make a person turn away from God.

### **1:5-8 Strangers Are Devouring Your Fields**

God's deal with the Jews from the beginning was, "If you are faithful to Me, you will enjoy the Promised Land. But if you rebel against me, you will suffer in this land, and ultimately will be removed from it."

As we study Israel's history, we see that they often suffered the consequences of disregarding God's warning. The question many people ask is, "Of what time specifically was Isaiah writing?"

Most people who attempt an educated guess come to the conclusion that the contents of chapter one were given to Isaiah during the reign of King Ahaz of Judah. We read about him in 2Kings 16. Ahaz was a wor-

shiper of false gods. He was so steeped in idolatry that he even offered his son as a human sacrifice. As a result, God...

**2Chr. 28:5 ...delivered him into the hand of the king of Aram; and they defeated him and carried away from him a great number of captives and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who inflicted him with heavy casualties.**

**2Chr. 28:8 The sons of Israel carried away captive of their brethren 200,000 women, sons and daughters; and they took also a great deal of spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.**

**2Chr. 28:17-18 ...again the Edomites had come and attacked Judah and carried away captives. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of the Negev of Judah...**

God had done this to humble Judah because Ahaz's example...

**2Chr. 28:19 ...brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD.**

**2Chr. 28:22 Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD.**

The head of Judah was sick, the heart of Judah was faint. The land was being made desolate. Invaders threatened, and casualties abounded. Judah was being left like an empty guard shack in a vineyard after harvest.

### **1:9 A Remnant**

The Bible describes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as terrible places:

**Gen. 13:13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.**

**Gen. 18:20 And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave."**

Things were so depraved around there that when male visitors

came to town, the men of the city would gang rape them. As a result, God completely destroyed them.

**Gen. 19:24-25 ...the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah  
brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He  
overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the in-  
habitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.**

Isaiah says that if God had not preserved some of the Jews as a remnant, they would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah - completely destroyed. The Lord has always been faithful to preserve a remnant of His people throughout history - and He will continue to do so. Paul the apostle quoted this verse in Romans (Rom. 9:29) when referring to the remnant of Israel that will be saved.

But in some ways, they were just like Sodom and Gomorrah...

### **1:10 Like Sodom And Gomorrah**

God calls Jerusalem's leaders, "you rulers of Sodom" and Jerusalem's people "you people of Gomorrah." This is clarified in chapter three:

**Is. 3:8-9 For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, be-  
cause their speech and their actions are against the LORD,  
to rebel against His glorious presence. The expression of  
their faces bears witness against them, and they display  
their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it...**

Were it not for God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Jews certainly would have been destroyed by God just like Sodom and Gomorrah.

### **1:11-15 Worthless Worship**

The amazing thing is that in spite of their having turned their backs on God, they continued in their Jewish worship. They would come into the temple, offer their burnt offerings, and observe every holiday and feast. They would stand and lift their hands as they recited prayers. But God had endured enough.

The offerings, He said, were worthless, and their incense stunk. He couldn't stand to listen to their prayers anymore. They were in the right

place, doing the right things on the right days, but their hearts were wrong. It was empty ritual, ceremonial religion.

Going through the motions of religion isn't what God wants from anyone. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he realized that his religious observance wasn't going to cut it with God. He wrote,

**Psa. 51:16-17 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**

God is never impressed simply by our church attendance or the amount of the offering. What He's looking for is a heart for Him. And if our hearts aren't right, then the rest of it is pointless. Even our prayers will go unanswered.

**Psa. 66:18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear**

As husbands, we are told to live with our wives in an understanding way...

**1Pet. 3:7 ...so that your prayers will not be hindered.**

God had hidden His eyes from them, and was no longer listening to their prayers. But their coffins weren't nailed shut just yet...

### **1:16-20 Choose Obedience Or Rebellion**

The Lord was giving them a chance. He told the people of Judah to repent. To turn away from their turning away. This is always the heart of God. Ezekiel spoke for God, saying,

**Ezek. 33:11 ...'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'**

And Peter told us that the Lord is...

**2Pet. 3:9 ...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**

The Lord tells them that their sins are "red like crimson." The word "crimson" there is "To-LAW." It is an interesting word, because it doesn't

just mean "crimson." It is the Hebrew name for a certain worm. The "**coccus ilicis**" was the worm that the Levites used to dye the curtains, veil, and other materials of the tabernacle scarlet.

When this worm is going to give birth, it permanently attaches itself to the trunk of a tree. It then lays its eggs beneath its body. When it dies, the worm seems to explode in scarlet fluid, staining the tree, and covering its offspring.

When Jesus spoke prophetically of His crucifixion through David in Psalm 22, He said,

**Ps. 22:6 But I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people.**

"Worm" is the same word: to-LAW. It was Jesus who fastened Himself to a tree, knowing that it would result in His death. His scarlet blood stained the tree and covered us, His offspring.

**1John 1:7 ...The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

When we repent, our crimson sin is made white by His crimson blood!

If the Jews in Judah refused to repent, however, God said that they would not be washed with white, but would be devoured by the sword.

### **1:21-23 The Faithful City Corrupted**

Jerusalem had once been the faithful city. But now God is equating her to a harlot. Everyone and everything in the city had been corrupted. The courts were a joke, not about justice. Greed ruled the day.

### **1:24-31 Judgment Now For A Better Future**

The Lord will purify those who are disobedient through affliction and difficulty. This is what He calls the Refiner's Fire. "Smelting away dross" is the process of purifying precious metals like silver and gold.

Smelting is accomplished by filling a furnace with ore and heating it up. The metal naturally sinks to the bottom, while impurities float to the surface to form a scum, which is then scraped off. This scum is called dross.

Through the flames of adversity, we are forced to either release our impurities, or admit that we are of no use to the Refiner. God's desire is that we are purified, not worthless. And His promise through Isaiah to the people of Jerusalem is that after this purification process, they will be restored back to being a city of righteousness. In that day, they will look back on their sin with shame.

How many of us are still unashamed of our sin. How freely I hear people brag about the "glory days." Saints, that's not repentance. It proves that we still have yet many impurities to be brought to the surface and removed. And one day, we will be able to say as the Psalmist,

**Psa. 66:10 ...You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined.**