

A BETTER KING, SERVANT, CONQUEROR

The Book of Isaiah

Isaiah 1

Verse to Remember

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Isaiah 1:18

Historical Context

Isaiah's ministry began about 740 years before Christ when the nation of Israel was divided into a northern and southern kingdom. The northern kingdom, called Israel, was made up of 10 tribes. It had been ruled for almost 200 years by kings that displeased God. The powerful kingdom of Assyria had already begun its conquest of these tribes.

The southern kingdom, called Judah, was made up of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It was ruled both by kings who pleased God and almost an equal number who displeased him. During Isaiah's ministry, four kings ruled. The first king, **Uzziah**, reigned for 52 years. God gave him success as long as he sought the Lord. Uzziah had a well-trained army, was prosperous and powerful, and completed many building projects. As his fame spread far and wide, his pride increased, he was unfaithful to God, and was then afflicted with leprosy. The second king, Uzziah's son, **Jotham**, reigned for 16 years. He "grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God,"¹ though the people continued with their corrupt practices of idolatry. **Ahaz**, Jotham's son, did not follow in his father's ways. During his 16-year reign he "promoted wickedness in Judah and [was] most unfaithful to the LORD."² The LORD gave him over to his enemies and Judah suffered greatly at their hands. The final king during Isaiah's ministry was **Hezekiah**, who reigned for 29 years. Though a son of Ahaz, Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. One of his greatest accomplishments was the restoration of the temple that his father had desecrated. He led his people in returning to the LORD with sacrifices and joyful worship. Though the kingdom was threatened by Assyria, God intervened to save Judah. Hezekiah's remaining days were peaceful, he was greatly honored, and he succeeded in everything he undertook and became exceedingly rich. Then his heart became filled with pride, and because of God's wrath he lay on his deathbed. Hezekiah repented, and God graciously restored him and added an additional 15 years to his life.³

Commentator William Sanford LaSor writes, "Isaiah is great for two reasons...he lived in momentous days, in critical days of international upheaval, and he wrote what many consider to be the greatest book of the Old Testament."⁴ So begins our study of Isaiah.

Day 1 — Read Isaiah 1.

1. God calls the heavens and earth to witness the charges against his people.
 - a. What charge does God bring? (v. 2)
 - b. How are the ox and donkey wiser than God's people? (v. 3)
2. Read the indictment of God's people in verse 4. Why do you think Isaiah uses such harsh language?
3. God speaks about these rebellious people as his children and his people. He also chose Isaiah, whose name means, "the LORD is salvation" that is, "the LORD is the source of salvation."⁵ What tone does this set from the very beginning of the book? (📖*Deut. 4:31; 1 Sam. 12:20–22)

Day 3 — Read Isaiah 1:16–20.

1. “The love which is hidden behind the wrath, and would gladly break through, already begins to disclose itself.”⁶
 - a. What is the bad news of verses 18–20?


 - b. What is the good news of verses 18–20?

2. The Holy One of Israel calls his people to reason with him so they will see their need. How does he accomplish the cleansing and redemption of his people? (Rom. 3:21–26; 1 Cor. 6:9–11)

Day 4 — Read Isaiah 1:21–26.

1. We’ll come to see that Isaiah is a master of carefully chosen images or word pictures that help unlock ideas and communicate God’s heart. How do the images in verses 21–22 help you understand Isaiah’s grief and indignation?


2. Jot down the contrast between what God wants for his people and the way things really are. (vv. 16–17, 23)

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3. Over the course of his book, Isaiah uses several different titles for God.
 - a. The most common title is “the Holy One of Israel,” which he uses 25 times in this book. Why do you think this title is appropriate given Isaiah's message?

 - b. In verse 24 he uses three additional titles back to back. Taken together, what do they convey?

Day 5 — Read Isaiah 1:27-31.


1. Zion is a term used interchangeably with Jerusalem to refer to God’s people.
 - a. What does the future hold for Zion? (vv. 25-27;  Rev. 21:1-7; Rev. 22:1-6)

 - b. What does the future hold for those who reject God’s gracious offer of salvation? (vv. 28-31; Rev. 21:8)

2. Reread chapter 1. What have you learned about God by what he loves and what he hates?

Review the lesson.

My take-away from this lesson is:

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

¹ 2 Chr. 27:6

² 2 Chr. 28:19

³ For more details on this period of Judah’s history read 2 Kings 15:32-2 Kings 20 and 2 Chronicles 27-32.

⁴ William Sanford LaSor, *Great Personalities of the Old Testament* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1959), 136.

⁵ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Volume 1 Chapters 1-18 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 3.

⁶ Young, quoting Delitzsch, p. 70.