



April 29, 2018

“Let’s Reason Together”

Isaiah 1-5

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Isaiah described the people of Judah (740BC) as being disobedient, ignorant, and defiant toward God and his laws. As a result, the nation of Judah was guilty of various sins and in danger of destruction by the Assyrians. Ironically, the way Isaiah described his generation is very similar to our own. The good news is that the hope and remedy that was available for the people of Judah is available to us today!

### Historical Background

1. The last 17 books of the Old Testament include what are known as the Major and Minor Prophets.
  - a. The books which make up the five Major Prophets are: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
  - b. The books which make up the twelve Minor Prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.
  - c. There is no “A” list and “B” list when it comes to these books; their placement in the Bible was based on the length of the writings of each prophet.
  
2. Every Old Testament prophet in the Bible, except for Elijah, spoke in a forthtelling and a foretelling way.
  - a. Foretelling messages from prophets would be about the future.
  - b. Forthtelling messages from prophets would be about their generation, etc.
    - i. Elijah spoke in a forthtelling way to the people of his time.

3. Isaiah was married to an unnamed prophetess, and they had two sons.
  - a. **Isaiah 8:3** - *"Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, 'Name him Maher-Shal-al-Hash-Baz.' "*
4. Isaiah's name in Hebrew is "Yesha 'yah," which means, the Lord has saved.
5. Isaiah ministered from approximately 740BC to 700BC, which was the period covered in **2 Kings 15-20**.
6. Isaiah ministered during the reign of four kings of Judah.
  - a. **Isaiah 1:1** - *"The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."*
7. The book of Isaiah can be likened to a huge warning label, in that Isaiah warned the nation of Judah to come back to God, because judgment was coming if they continued to rebel against God.
8. Isaiah also shared a message of hope when he told the people that returning to God would ensure that all would go well for them.
  - a. Examples of this theme in Scripture include:
    - i. **Deuteronomy 4:40** - *"Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time."*
    - ii. **Jeremiah 38:20b** - *"Obey the LORD by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you..."*
    - iii. **Luke 11:28** - *"[Jesus] replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'"*
9. After the reign of King Solomon, the third king of Israel, approximately 150 years before Isaiah's time, the nation of Israel was involved in civil war.
10. Isaiah ministered to the southern territory called Judah.
  - a. Judah was in the southern part of the nation, and the northern part of the nation was called Israel.
11. During Isaiah's ministry the northern territory was besieged by the Assyrians, whose territory included all or parts of Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, and Iran.
  - a. The Assyrians were a ruthless people who murdered the children, raped the women, and enslaved the men in the countries they conquered.

12. Isaiah's message to the people of Judah was to take notice of what was happening in Israel, because not getting right with God, so to speak, would ensure that they would suffer the same fate.
13. God was merciful toward the people of Judah, and his judgment was withheld for approximately 135 years, because the people eventually turned to God after about 40 years of Isaiah's warnings.

### Three Types Of People In Judah

14. People who could care less, so they were intentionally disobedient concerning God's laws.
  - a. **Isaiah 1:2** - *"Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken" 'I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.'*"
15. People who claimed ignorance about God's laws, but they had all of the information they needed to understand God's laws.
  - a. **Isaiah 1:3** - *"The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."*
  - b. Ignorance is never an excuse for innocence, and that was the case for Judah because they should have known who God was.
16. People who were defiant toward God and his laws.
  - a. **Isaiah 1:4** - *"Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him."*

### Indictments Against Judah

17. The people practiced "religion" without a real heart for God.
  - a. **Isaiah 1:10-13** - *"Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 'The multitude of your sacrifices - what are they to me?' says the LORD. 'I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations - I cannot bear your evil assemblies."*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: "They were just going through the motions without the emotion. They were practicing religious duty, but there was a disconnect with the heart. They were just going through the [religious] rituals with no real heartfelt intent behind it..."

- c. **Isaiah 29:13** - *“The Lord says: ‘These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.’ ”*
  - d. Jesus quoted **Isaiah 29:13** when he condemned the Pharisees. <sup>1</sup>
  - e. Pastor Gary said: “What God wants is not just religious talk; he wants your heart. ... He doesn’t just want your church attendance; he wants your heart. He’s not impressed with what you give in the offering; he wants your heart. He’s not impressed by raised hands in worship if [your] heart’s not there. What he wants more than any of your religiosity or spiritual expression is [your] heart.”
18. The people celebrated sin.
- a. **Isaiah 3:8-9** - *“Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence. The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.”*
  - b. The people of Sodom practiced open, flagrant sin, so Isaiah compared the people of Judah with the people of Sodom.
  - c. Pastor Gary said: “The moral decline of a nation is not progress. The moral decline of a nation is a precursor to its demise. ... Look at the great civilizations of Greece, Rome, [and] Carthage. ... When morality started to decline, and immorality took root, [that started] the eventual demise of that civilization. It’s an historical fact. ... It might be a slow death, but it will be an eventual death for any nation that allows morality to become redefined and unchecked, and immorality takes root.”
  - d. **Psalms 33:12** - *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD..”*
  - e. “If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.” - Daniel Webster <sup>2</sup>
19. The people valued the work of man above the work of God.
- a. **Isaiah 5:8-12** - *“Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land. The LORD Almighty has declared in my hearing: ‘Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants. A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine, a homer of seed only an ephah of grain.’ Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night*

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<sup>1</sup> **Matthew 15:8**

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/160793-if-we-abide-by-the-principles-taught-in-the-bible>

*till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands.”*

- b. Pastor Gary said: “[Isaiah described] a culture that was preoccupied with self and personal ambition. [Isaiah described] a culture in which materialism had become their god, [and] where pleasure had become their goal. They were ‘living large’ and forgetting God. Not too unlike our world! And how ironic is it that the one who is the source behind everything we enjoy is often the first we forget when we enjoy what we have. ... Luxury and materialism can blind us to the goodness of God.”
  - c. **Deuteronomy 6** is about Moses’ warning to the Israelites to not forget God!
20. The people became their own moral standard.
- a. **Isaiah 5:20-21** - *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “They started inverting a system of what was right and wrong. They were guilty because they became their own moral standard. Israel had refused to recognize God as the objective moral standard of right and wrong. Evil became subjective. Good became subjective. ... Everybody had their own personal standard because they had rejected God as the objective moral standard for right and wrong.”

#### God’s Good News!

21. **Isaiah 1:18** - *“‘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 as crimson, they shall be like wool.’ ”*
22. The stain of sin in our lives is permanent, and God is the only one who can remove the stain and the guilt of our sin!
23. Some Hebrew scholars have translated the first part of this verse in this way: “Come, please!”

#### Discussion Questions

1. Read **Isaiah 1:1-4** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.

2. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when the Lord sent someone into their lives who shared a message of warning. (See #7 and #12 above)
3. Spend time talking about the three types of people who lived in Judah, including reading and discussing [Isaiah 1:2-4](#). (See #14 through #16 above)
4. Read and discuss [Isaiah 1:10-13](#). (See #17 above)
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about religion verses relationship. (See #17b and #17e above)
6. Read and discuss [Isaiah 3:8-9](#). (See #18 above)
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about moral decline the resulting dangers. (See #18c above)
8. Read and discuss the quote by Daniel Webster. (See #18e above)
9. Read and discuss [Isaiah 5:8-12](#). (See #19 above)
10. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about elevating self above God. (See #19b above)
11. Read and discuss [Isaiah 5:20-21](#). (See #20 above)
12. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about elevating self above God. (See #20b above)
13. Read and discuss [Isaiah 1:18](#), giving thanks for everything the Lord has done to make forgiveness and salvation a reality for all who would believe!
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).