

(Isaiah) Hope in the Midst of Judgment

by David Guzik

The book of Isaiah chapter 1 presents God's judgment on Judah for their sin and rebellion, highlighting the importance of faithfulness and obedience to God.

Duration: 1:05:09

Topics: "Redemption Through Faith", "Gods Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the harmful effects of public entertainments that have corrupted the youth and led to the suffering of others. He emphasizes that despite the sins committed, there is still a chance for redemption. The preacher uses the analogy of refining metal to illustrate how God will purify and cleanse individuals of their impurities. The sermon concludes with the invitation for people to reason with God and seek forgiveness, as His direction is reasonable and wise.

Transcript

Isaiah chapter 1, verse 1, the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem and the Danes of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. This is the book of the prophecies of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who ministered from about 740 to 680 BC. For about 20 years, he spoke to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

But after the northern kingdom's fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC, Isaiah continued to prophesy to Judah. This period of Israel's history is told to us in 2 Kings 15-21 and 2 Chronicles 26-33. Let me say that again, because you should be reading these chapters.

You need to understand the historical time that Isaiah was prophesying to. 2 Kings 15-21, 2 Chronicles 26-33. Isaiah was a contemporary of prophets such as Hosea and Micah.

Now, by the time of Isaiah, the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, and Amos, they had already completed their ministry. Let's get some time reference here. By the time Isaiah began his ministry, Israel had been in the promised land for almost 700 years.

The first 400 years in Canaan, Israel was ruled by judges. Spiritual, military, and political leaders God would raise up as the occasion demanded. Then for about 120 years after that initial 400 years, three kings reigned over Israel, Saul, David, and Solomon.

But in 917 BC, some 200 years before the time of Isaiah, Israel had a civil war and it remained divided into two nations, the nation of Israel to the north and the nation of Judah to the south, all the way up to the time of Isaiah. Up until the time of Isaiah, the northern nation of Israel had had 18 kings, all 18 of them bad, wicked men. The southern kingdom of Judah had some 11 kings before the time of Isaiah's ministry, some of them good, some of them bad.

But in the time of Isaiah, Israel was a little nation caught between the wars of three superpowers, Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. And as Isaiah's ministry began, there was a national crisis in the northern nation of Israel. The superpower of Assyria was about to engulf the nation of Israel.

And during the span of the prophet Isaiah, his ministry, the southern nation of Judah was also faced with threats from Assyria and Babylon, as well as other nations. Now, many modern scholars think that there was more than one author to the book of Isaiah. I don't know if you ever read books like this.

You ever hear people talk like this. It's a waste of your time. If you do, they'll come and tell you, well, you know, you take a look at the first 39 chapters of Isaiah, Isaiah 1 through 39, and it's very different in its literary character from chapters 40 through 66.

So there must have been two different Isaiahs that wrote it. I mean, it couldn't possibly be that one man would write in two different styles for two different purposes, right? I mean, that seems to be beyond the realm of possibility to these people. And so they throw about terms like Deutero-Isaiah or Trito-Isaiah or the Isaiahanic school.

My friends, let me tell you something. I can settle the issue for you right now. How many people wrote Isaiah? I can tell you right now how many Isaiahs there were.

You see, the New Testament quotes Isaiah by name more than all the other writings of the prophets combined. And I'll tell you how you can find out how many Isaiahs there were. Keep your finger on Isaiah chapter one.

Go to the gospel of John chapter 12. Settle this issue right now. It's amazing how man can make complex something that's very simple.

John chapter 12, verse 37. But although he had done so many signs before them, that he did they did not believe in him that the word of Isaiah, the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke. OK, here's Isaiah, the prophet, Lord, who has believed our report and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? That's from Isaiah chapter 53.

OK, that's one Isaiah, verse 39. Therefore, they could not believe because Isaiah said again. He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their heart, lest they should turn and said, I should heal them.

That's supposedly taken from the other Isaiah. Well, John just knows there's one. Matter of fact, he makes a point emphatically in verse 41.

Look, these things Isaiah's said when they saw his glory and no. Just one Isaiah, right? Well, that settles it, doesn't it? One quote from one supposed author of Isaiah, another quote from another supposed one Isaiah. That's all there is to it.

Isaiah chapter one, verse one. The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz. Now the name Isaiah means salvation is of the Lord.

It's a surprisingly common name in the Old Testament. There's at least seven name by the name of seven men by the name of Isaiah in the Bible. But there's only one Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

By the way, some people have thought that this Amoz and the prophet Amos were the same people. No, not at all. Some ancient traditions do say, though, that this Amoz was a brother of King Amaziah.

But there's no biblical way to prove this. We do know a little bit more about the prophet Isaiah than we know of many prophets. Isaiah was married.

He was the father of at least two sons, and he lived in Jerusalem. We'll find these things out as we continue on through the book. There's also a very strong Jewish and Christian tradition that Isaiah was martyred when he hid in a hollow tree and a king in his rage knew he was in there and commanded that the tree be cut in half.

And so Isaiah was sawn in two. There's a reference in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 37, speaking of worthy men of old. It doesn't mention anybody by name, but it says they were sawn in two.

And most people believe that's a reference to Isaiah in his martyrdom. Most of all, Isaiah was a great man of God. One commentator, Bultima, says Isaiah has the courage of a Daniel, the sensitivity of a Jeremiah, the pathos of a Hosea and the raging anger of an Amos.

And moreover, he leaves all of them far behind in the unique art of holy mockery. His courage is of such a nature that he never, not even for a moment, shows himself to be weak or timid. Now, the prophecy that we're going to cover here in Isaiah chapter one probably took place in the time of Ahaz, the king of Judah.

You'll find this in Second Kings chapter 16 and Second Chronicles 28. Why don't you write that in the margin of your Bible? That way you know what times he's speaking about. Second Kings chapter 16 and Second Chronicles chapter 28.

Ahaz, the king during this period, was an evil king who was invaded by many surrounding nations. Let's see what the word of the Lord has to say to Isaiah. Oh, one more thing before we jump into verse two.

Please do not expect the book of Isaiah to be chronological. It's not arranged chronologically. Just get that out of your mind.

I mean, it's a collection of prophecies, and the time period that's addressed by these prophecies isn't consecutive. So don't expect it to be. We're dealing here with the prophecy in the days of Ahaz.

Verse two. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know. My people do not consider. Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corruptors.

They have forsaken the Lord. They've provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel. They have turned away backward.

In the beginning of verse two, prophet Isaiah, speaking on behalf of the Lord, cries out and he says, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. God is calling heaven and earth as witnesses against Judah. The leaders and people of Judah have resisted His will, and God will state His case against them.

We might think of heaven and earth as being the jury. Judah has been called into the court. And now God says, Okay, I'm going to prosecute the case.

Now, of course, the prosecutor is also the judge. And he says, Here's my case against Judah. Heaven and earth, you listen to the case I'm going to make.

What's his case? Look at verse two here. He says, I have nourished and brought up children, and they've rebelled against me. Friends, each and every one of us, when we're older, not when we're younger, but when we're older and have children, everybody recognizes how wrong it is, how terrible it is for children to rebel against and reject their parents.

I mean, here the parent thinks, I raised this child. I gave forth so much for this child. All the money I spent, all the time I spent, everything I did for them.

And we would say it's so much worse when the parent's been a good parent. Oh, sure, every once in a while you see a parent who's a bad parent. And the child wants to run away from home or the child wants to rebel.

You say, Well, I mean, they're a bad parent. You can't blame the poor child. But what about when the parent's been a good parent? You look at that child.

You say, You ungrateful child. You have no respect for your parents. You're a bad person.

You're rebelling against your parent, and they've treated you well. Friends, what about when the parent's been a perfect parent? And I mean, perfect. Do you realize that's what the Lord's been to us? And that's what he says.

I've nourished and brought up children, and they've rebelled against me. It's a crime against God. As parents, we can appreciate how frustrating and galling it is for our children to disregard and disobey us.

It fills us with a righteous indignation. And we think, After all I've done for them, they treat me like this. But we've treated God worse than any child has ever treated their parents.

It gets worse. You think it's bad for God to compare Judah to a disobedient child? Look at what he says next in verse 3. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib. But Israel does not know.

My people do not consider. Now, you might think that God is saying, Oh, Judah, they're dumb as an ox. They're dumb as a donkey.

No, worse is what he's saying. He's saying the ox has enough sense to know its owner. The ox knows the one who's its master.

Why, the donkey? The donkey knows who puts food in its trough. Israel doesn't know. Israel doesn't acknowledge them.

For as no animal has ever offended, or resisted, or rejected, or disobeyed God the way every human being has, any animal has been a more faithful servant of God than the best human. So God says, the ox and the donkey, they're better to me than Israel. And so he says, verse 4, a last sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers.

They've forsaken the Lord. They provoke to anger the Holy One of Israel. They've turned away backward.

And he continues on verse 5. He says, why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there's no soundness in it.

But wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, they have not been closed up, or bound up, or soothed with ointment. Your country's desolate. Your cities are burned with fire.

Strangers devour your land and your presence, and it's desolate, it's overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom.

We would have been made like Gomorrah. You see, despite their sin, God does not wish evil upon Judah. Instead, He longs for them to repent and to make it easy on themselves.

He says, why should you be stricken again? Why should I strike you again? It's like a parenting child. Do I need to spank you again? I don't want to spank you again. Just obey me.

Just turn your heart. God has been chastising Judah, and they have not responded. They will continue to be stricken as long as they rebel.

And look at the picture he paints in verses 5 and 6. He says, you're sick. Your whole heart faints. There's no soundness.

There's wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. Because of their rebellion against God, Judah was in a bad place. This is where their disobedience and lack of submission has brought them.

See if they're like destitute, sick, diseased, cancerous people. Yet they still stick to their own ways. Isn't it amazing how stubborn the human race is in clinging to its sin? And here it is, destroying Judah, making them sick.

But they'll hang on to it. He goes on, and he says in verse 7 that their country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire.

Strangers, devour your land and your presence. And during the reign of Ahaz, the king of Judah, Israel, or Judah, was attacked and pillaged by Israel, by Syria, by Edom, and by the Philistines, and even by Assyria. And it was written during this period.

I'm reading to you from 2 Chronicles 28, verse 19. It says, for the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord. Let me read that again.

I might have been reading that from today's newspaper. Let me read that again. For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been

continually unfaithful to the Lord.

So what did the Lord do? He brought them low. He sent them the Israelites, and they attacked them. He sent them the Syrians, and they attacked them.

He sent the Edomites, and they attacked them. The Philistines, and they attacked the Assyrians, and they attacked them. And this is the result.

Look at verse 7. Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Strangers, devour your land and your presence.

And it's desolate. Would they repent? No. You see, for all this, Judah would still not repent.

Their sin brought them great trouble. But they still preferred their sin with all of its trouble than submitting to the Lord God. In fact, 2 Chronicles 28, verse 22 says this, Now in the time of his distress, King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord.

The worse it got, the more unfaithful he became. But God would not abandon Israel. Look at verse 9. It says, As bad as Judah's state was, it could have been worse.

It was only by the mercy of God that they survived it all. Listen, Sodom and Gomorrah were both totally destroyed, and not even a small remnant was left to carry on from them. Even in his judgment, God showed his mercy to Judah.

Now, it's interesting. As you make the transition into verse 10, it's as if Isaiah the prophet is saying, And speaking of Sodom and Gomorrah, verse 10, Wow. Lay it on the line here, don't you? You know who he's talking to.

Friends, he's not talking to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were destroyed hundreds and hundreds of years before. He's talking to the leaders of Judah and the people of Judah.

And friends, he's not just saying it's just the leaders. He's not saying it's just the people. He's pointing them both out.

You rulers of Sodom, you people of Gomorrah, you people may as well be the leaders and the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. He's trying to get their attention, obviously, saying these are the cities synonymous with sin and judgment. And he goes on.

Look at what he says in verse 11. It's almost shocking. He says, Do you understand what's going on here? Even in the midst of their rebellion, the rulers and the people of Judah continued their religious ceremonies and rituals.

They continued the sacrifices. They continued to burn offerings. They continued bringing the fat of fed cattle.

They continued bringing incense. They continued their assemblies and their sacred meetings. And God was sick of it all.

Can you imagine? It's as if God's saying, Why are you even coming to church? Why are you singing the praise songs? Why are you having potlucks? Why are you putting money in the offering? I'm sick of it, God

says. That's shocking, isn't it? Why? What a sobering thought that we can offer God all kinds of religious rituals, all kinds of ceremonies, all kinds of religious services, and He may hate it and consider it an abomination. You know, perhaps in the midst of all their calamity, all the invasions from other nations, all the trouble they were going through, maybe in the midst of all that, the people of Judah thought, Hey, you know what we need to do? We need to get back to church.

We need to go back to religious ceremonies. Yeah, that's it. We'll go to church again and put a few dollars in the offering.

But if their heart wasn't changed, if their heart wasn't humbled and surrendered to the Lord, it made no difference. Without the right heart, God hated their religious ceremony and service. So what does He say in verse 15? Did you see that? He says, when you spread out your hands, I'll hide my eyes from you.

You know what that means? It means to spread out your hands was the posture of prayer. See, in ancient Israel, they didn't pray with their hands folded and head bowed. They prayed with their hands stretched out to heaven and their face sort of pointed up to heaven.

And when God says it, it's as if God would say to us today, when you bow your head and fold your hands, I'm putting my fingers in my ears. I'm not listening. I don't want to hear it.

But, we may be certain that in the midst of all this religious ceremony, there were many fine prayers offered. Oh yes, that was a fine prayer. Fine, fine prayer.

Many emotional prayers. Eloquent, stirring prayers. But they were empty, hollow, useless prayers because God looked at Judah and He said, your hands are full of blood.

So what's going to happen? God says, well, let me suggest a cure to you. This is what you need to do. Here's your prescription.

Verse 16. Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean.

Put away the evil of your doings from before your eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good.

Seek justice. Remove the oppressor. Defend the fatherless.

Plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they're red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you're willing and obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword.

For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. I want you to notice something. God is saying that the leaders of Israel were corrupt.

That the people of Israel were corrupt, right? Now, how could you tell? How could you tell? Could you tell by the religious ceremonies? No. All the religious ceremonies carried on as before. They still made the offerings.

They still prayed the prayers. They still brought the blood. They still had the sacred assemblies.

You looked at the church attendance, so to speak, of Judah in those days, and it looked just the same. You know where you saw the evidence of the corruption of their heart? In the way they treated other people. That's where you saw it.

So he says, learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. The corruption of Judah's leaders and people was shown in their bad treatment of one another. I almost think Isaiah has been reading 1 John when I read this.

How about this from 1 John chapter 4? If someone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? All the religious rituals were there. But Isaiah takes a look around and, inspired by the Lord, he says, you've got to treat each other right.

The leaders and the people of Judah wanted to say they loved God by their religious ceremonies. But the Lord cared more about how they treated other people, especially the weak, the fatherless, the widow. I'm half afraid by this Bible study tonight, I'm going to drive you all out of here.

You're going to think, I don't want you here at church. Oh, no, I want you here at church. I'm glad you're here.

Let me tell you something. If you're faced with the option of getting it right with another brother or sister or coming to church tonight, you should have got it right with the brother or sister and then come to church. Well, I would have been late.

That's OK. The Lord would forgive you that one. If you had the option tonight of really helping somebody who was in need before you or coming to church, you should have helped that person and then come to church or get the tape.

See, my friends, that's what Jesus says. He says, if you're on your way to the altar and you remember, oh, I'm not right with my brother or sister. He says, stop, go get it right with your brother or sister, then bring your gift to the altar.

Say, well, they don't want to get it right with me. Well, you get it right with them as much as you can. Then you come and bring your gift to the altar.

Otherwise, your religious ceremony is just a sham. Remember another time when Jesus said that this man traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was traveling along and he got overtaken by muggers and beaten up and left for dead in a ditch by the road. And two kinds of people passed him.

A priest passed him and a Levite passed him, probably both on their way to the temple. Well, I can't help this man. I've got religious service to do in Jerusalem.

He said, no, you should have helped that man. That was a more sacred religious service. See, this is what the prophet Isaiah said.

They were fine in the religious ceremony department. Where they were lacking was in the loving one another. So what does God say in verse 18? Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord.

Lord God invites his people to come and reason with him. What he offers us isn't just offered because he's bigger than us and has the right to dictate whatever terms please him. God's fully justified in saying, look,

this is it.

Take it or leave it. I don't have to tell you anything. No, you know what the Lord says to you tonight? Come, let's reason together.

Let's talk about it. Let me reason with you about these things. God's direction for us is reasonable.

It's smart. It's the best way to live. Friends, what madness it is to resist a God of infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite grace and infinite power.

True reason would drive any honest man to the humble adoration and submission of God. No, the angels that surround the throne of God are covered with eyes and that speaks of their ability to perceive everything. They see so much.

They know so much. They are perhaps the most intelligent, created beings in all the universe. Other than God himself, of course, who is not a created being.

And these most intelligent, rational beings in all of God's creation, what do they do day and night without ceasing? They worship and adore God. That is where the highest reason in the world will drive us. It's just plain reasonable to follow God.

Have you ever once heard of an old Christian on their deathbed? There they are. They're dying breath. They've only got a little more ability to talk.

They gather their children and their friends around them and they say, now, friends, watch out for that Christianity. I followed Jesus my whole life and I'm so sorry I did. What a waste it was.

Have you ever heard anybody say anything remotely like that? What nonsense? Friends, Christianity, following Jesus Christ is the most reasonable thing you can do. Not only is it reasonable now, it's reasonable on your deathbed. We find Christians on their deathbed are trusting and loving God more than others.

Other times, it's just plain reasonable. So, what does God invite us to do? He says, if you look at it here in verse 18, The Lord offers a humble, repentant Judah true and complete cleansing from sin. Friends, this is exciting.

Their condition of sin can be transformed from deeply stained to completely white. Now, in this passage, Isaiah says nothing about how this cleansing comes, but we know that it comes because Jesus took upon himself our stain of sin and God judged sin perfectly and completely in Jesus so that we can be accounted white as snow and as white as wool before him. Friends, what tremendous hope there is in God's forgiveness.

We really can be clean from the state of sin. Our good works can't clean the stain. Our best intentions and promises can't clean the stain.

Our suffering or pain can't clean the stain. Time can't clean the stain. Death can't clean the stain.

Only the work of Jesus can make us white as snow. We really can have a break with the past and a new beginning in Jesus Christ. The power of sin, the shame of sin, the guilt of sin, the domination of sin, the terror of sin and the pain of sin can all be taken away in Jesus.

I love it how he says it. He doesn't say, well, look, if you're a little dingy around the edges, Jesus can make you clean. No, what does he say? If your sins are like scarlet, you ever seen scarlet? Man, it's red.

If it's red, it's crimson. No, you got a few spots here and there. Well, then I can help you, God says.

No, no, scarlet, crimson, Spurgeon says. The Lord does not deny the truth of what the sinner has confessed, but he says to him, though your sins be as scarlet, I meet you on that ground. You need not try to diminish the extent of your sin or seek to make it appear less than it really is.

No, whatever you say it is, it's all that and probably far more. The deepest sense of your sinfulness does not come up to the truth concerning your real condition. Certainly you do not exaggerate it in the least.

Your sins are scarlet and crimson. It seems as though you have put on an imperial robe of sin and made yourself a monarch of the realm of evil. That's how a man's guilt appears before the searching eye of God.

You know what this means? There is no one past the cleansing power of Jesus. There has never been on this earth a sinner so scarlet, so crimson with their sin that God could not cleanse them. Not a one.

I just have to read this one from Spurgeon. You may be a wicked old wretch who has taken his degrees in Satan's college, has become a master of Belial, a prince and a chief of sinners, a Goliath among the Philistines. Yet to such a man is this word sent today.

Your hands are bloody with the souls of the young. You've kept a hell house. You've grid up public entertainments which have debauched and depraved the young.

You've gold in your pocket today. Which you've earned by the blood of souls. You have the fool's pants and the drunkard shillings which have really come into your hands from the hearts of poor women.

You've heard the cries of starving children. And you've tempted their husbands to take the drink and ruin their bodies and their souls. You've kept a place where the entertainment was so low, so groveling that you awoke the slumbering passions of evil in the minds of either young or old.

And so you shall sink to hell with the blood of others on your head as well as your own damnation. Not with one millstone around your neck, but with many. Yet you can still be white.

Take one man, drug dealer, immoral, drunkard, worse in every way that you can imagine. God can take that man and clean him and make him white. So when we consider the greatness of God's cleansing and pardon, it's all the more reason for us to do... Do you see what it says here in verse 18? I like just the first two words.

Come now. Come now. God wants the separation between you and He to be gone now.

He doesn't want you to continue in your destructive path another moment. He wants the best for us now. Come now.

Come now. When could it ever be better? Come now. You may never have another warning to your heart like you have right now.

There may never be people praying for you the way they are right now. You may never heard the Word preached again like you're hearing it right now. You may never have loving people around you like you

have right now.

Your heart may never be as soft as it is right now. You may never have people around you to support you and love you and care for you as you have right now. Why would you delay? Why put off? Got that winning ticket to the lottery.

You say, I'll cash it in later. It's always another opportunity. No.

Come now. The eye of your Father sees you afar off and He's running towards you. Come now.

That's why He says in verse 19, if you're willing and obedient, you'll eat of the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you'll be devoured by the sword. Friends, it's either eat or be eaten.

Obey God and eat of the good of the land. Disobey Him and you're going to be devoured. You're going to be eaten by the sword.

Friends, let me ask you a question. Verse 19 says, if you are willing and obedient. Verse 20 says, if you refuse and rebel, which better characterizes your life? Nobody perfectly matches either phrase.

But which phrase better describes your life? Willing and obedient or refuse and rebel. There's a consequence attached to either one. So verse 21, how the faithful city has become a harlot.

It was full of justice, righteousness lodged in it. But now murderers. Your silver has become dross.

Your wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes and follows after rewards.

They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them. You know what the faithful city is, don't you? It's Jerusalem. Once known for its faithfulness to the Lord.

Oh, what a glorious cities in the day of David and the day of Solomon. But now it's become a harlot. It was full of justice.

Oh, the days of justice and righteousness. They're long past in Jerusalem. Now it's filled with murderers.

It's filled with political corruption. It's filled with thieves, with fraud, with bribes and favoritism against the weak. Sounds like any modern city in America right now, doesn't it? The Lord's accusation against Jerusalem shows what God values among political and civil leaders.

He wants him to keep the peace. God looked at Jerusalem and said, there's murderers here. Let me tell you, God looks at Los Angeles right now and he says, there's murderers there.

He says, where's the integrity? No, they're rebellious and the companions of thieves instead. And he says, are they defending the weak or people praying on the fatherless and the widows? Do you want an example of how the cheating was going on? He says, your wine was mixed with water. You know, the Lord Jesus made water into wine, but sinners make wine into water.

They dilute it. So the corruption was deep. He goes on and he says, here's my plan here of ridding this.

Verse 24. He says, therefore, the Lord of hosts, the Lord says, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel. By the way, we stop right there.

If the Lord ever addresses you this way, you better stand up and take notice. Let me read it again. Verse 24.

Therefore, the Lord says, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel. Do you know what it means, Lord of hosts? To us, it just kind of sounds, you know, kind of religious. You know, it sounds like something from a hymn, right? Oh, Lord of hosts, whatever.

You know, you go on and it's just kind of neat spiritual, you know, Elizabethan thing. Oh, marvelous, marvelous. Do you know what Lord of hosts means? Friends, a host is an army.

This is God saying, attention. This is the Lord, the warrior, the general of all the armies of heaven. And I'm talking to you.

That's heavy. That's God speaking in terms of commander in chief. The title itself is a wake up call.

And then he says, I will rid myself of my adversaries and take vengeance on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you and thoroughly purge away your dross and take away all of your alloy. You see what he says here? There's impurities in you.

And what I'm going to do is I'm going to turn up the heat and take away these impurities. There's dross in you. And you know how you get the dross out of metal? You melt it.

And then you scrape off the dross. We love to sing that song, don't we? Refiner's fire. My heart's one.

Oh, Lord. Yes. Refiner's fire.

Yeah. How do you sing it in the fire? How do you sing it when you're being melted, when you have the dross scraped away? Then you're calling everybody up. Oh, God doesn't love me anymore.

And then when things get better, you come to church, sing refiner's fire. My heart's one desire. Oh, Lord, forgive us all.

But then he says, listen, here's his purpose. Verse 26, I will restore your judges is at the first and your counselors is at the beginning. Afterward, you should be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

But God's refining process, it isn't to torture us. It isn't to melt us. It isn't to say, well, I'm going to turn up the heat on them.

It's to purify us. It's to bring something good out. It's to bring us forth as pure gold.

And God says, I'm going to do it. I want to redeem with justice. Look at verse 27.

Zion shall be redeemed with justice and her penitence with righteousness. The destruction of transgressions and of sinners shall be together. Those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

And he goes on here in this condemnation of idolatry, for they shall be ashamed of the terrible trees which you've desired, which you should be embarrassed because the gardens which you've chosen, and you should be at the terrible tree whose leaf fades. There's a garden that has no water. The strong shall be as a tender and the work of it as a spark.

Both will burn together and no one shall quench them. And he's mentioning terrible trees, terrible trees, basically an oak tree. And in many of the pagan cults that were present in the land of Israel in that day, they would worship at or under these great oak trees.

You know, there's something just kind of majestic about a great big old oak tree, isn't there? And they would notice that and they would in those days have pagan shrines of worship under these great trees. God says, I'm going to bring you to the place where you are ashamed of your former idolatries when you're embarrassed over those things. Friends, you know, it's good to be ashamed and embarrassed over sin.

There's something wrong with us when we're shameless and beyond embarrassment. God promised that he would give Judah the gift of embarrassment and shame again. He goes, you're going to look at those things and be embarrassed.

He says, there's a dryness here. You're like those trees, but they're all out of water. There's tender and they're going to burn together.

There's dry trees, dry gardens and dry tender are ready to burn. So is an unrepentant Judah ready to feel the fires of God's refining judgment. Oh, what a strong word of the Lord to Judah.

Now, in Isaiah, chapter two, it begins a section that lasts for three chapters. We're not going to approach it all this evening. We're going to cover chapter two.

Chapters two, three and four essentially cover all one prophecy again concerning Judah. Now, you should know that not every prophecy in the book of Isaiah is directed to the nation of Judah. Some are directed to the northern nation of Israel.

Some are directed to surrounding nations. Some are directed to individuals. But these first two major prophecies in chapter one and in chapters two, three and four are directed to the nation of Judah.

Verse one, the word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now, it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. All nations shall flow to it.

Many people shall come and say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways and we shall walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Praise God. See, in the midst of all this sin, in the midst of all this difficulty, in the midst of all this corruption in Judah, God says there's coming a day when it's going to be different. And he describes this as the latter days.

Verse two, it shall come to pass in the latter days. And in this context, the term latter days refers to the times of the Messiah when the anointed of the Lord reigns over the earth. This specifically refers to a time that many people would call the millennium, the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth.

And what's it going to be like in those days? The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills and all the nations will flow to it. Friends, during the millennium, Israel will be the superpower of the world. Isn't that absurd? Israel, little nation.

It's going to be the superpower. You know, right now the United States can pretty much do whatever it wants all over the world. We can do it.

We've got the military and the economic and the cultural might. We rule the world. Israel is going to be the superpower of the world in the millennium.

Little Israel. It's going to be the leading nation in all the earth. And the center of Israel will be the mountain of the Lord's house.

You know what that is? The Temple Mount in Israel. The Temple Mount, which will be the capital of the government of the Messiah. And all the nations will flow to the capital of the government of Jesus.

That's how it's going to be in the millennium. Jesus Christ is going to establish the seat of his government on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. And everybody's going to come as tourists.

Come see it as worshippers all over the world. They're going to come. Let's go to Jerusalem.

We've got to see the government of the Messiah. They're going to say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord. He will teach us his ways and we shall walk in his paths during the millennium.

The citizens of earth will acknowledge and submit to the lordship of Jesus. It will be a time of perfectly administrated and forced righteousness on this earth. Matter of fact, look at verse four.

He says he shall judge between the nations and shall rebuke many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation.

Neither shall they learn war anymore. During the reign of the Messiah, when Jesus Christ returns to planet Earth and establishes kingdom and rules and reigns on this earth for a thousand years, there's not going to be any more war. Oh, there's going to be conflicts between nations and individuals.

But you know what? The Messiah or his administrators are going to step in and say, let's settle this right now. And I'll tell you how this is going to be settled. He's going to decisively resolve either himself or those who reign with him.

And you know who's going to reign with him? Us. It isn't the reign of the Messiah itself that will change the heart of man. Citizens of earth will still need to trust in Jesus and his work on their behalf for their personal salvation during the millennium.

But war and armed conflict will not be tolerated. As a matter of fact, God says, see those swords? Feed them into plowshares. See those spears? May as well make pruning hooks out of them.

You're not going to need any more. That gun, that missile, that tank, that fire jet? Melt it down. No use for it anymore.

Wipe it out. Well, but what if we need to protect? No use for it anymore, Jesus will say. Melt it down.

And that's going to be it. Well, what if somebody doesn't like it? What if they don't want to do what Jesus wants them to do during the millennium? Psalm 2 9 tells us what the Messiah will do to the disobedient during the millennium. It says, you shall break them with a rod of iron.

You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. You ever seen a crowbar hit a clay pot? Not much left, is there? There's a nice satisfying pop. And things just shatters.

Basically, God says, you know what? The people who don't get along with the Messiah's program during the millennium, they're going to be popped like a crowbar pops a clay pot. That's it. That's all there is to it.

No more war because there's a new ruler on earth, Jesus Christ. Friends, don't you long for the day when there's no more need for military budget? When the money that goes for weapons and armies can go to schools and parks? Can I tell you we're only safe doing that when the Messiah reigns among us? When Jesus rules and reigns among us, then we can do it. Until then, there's a lot of bad people in this world that God uses the godly administration of weapons and warfare to keep in check.

So, verse five, O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Isn't that great? I had a great memory verse in this chapter. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

You see, after painting the picture of the glory of the Messiah's reign, Isaiah then challenges Judah, the house of Jacob, to live in the Messiah's reign right now. Walk in the light of the Lord. That means to order your life after God's truth and God's ways.

The ultimate reign of the Messiah may be many, many years away, but Jesus can reign in our lives right now. He can reign in our minds right now. He can reign in our hearts right now.

You don't have to wait for the enforced righteousness of the millennium to have the blessing of Jesus's righteousness in your life right now. You can walk in the light of the Lord right now and enjoy the blessings of the Messiah's reign right now. You don't have to walk in a dark, depressing, discouraged Christian life.

You can walk in the light of the Lord. What is it that gets you down? What is it that brings darkness into your life? What can that thing compare to the light of the Lord? Honestly, now. Oh, I'm under the darkness of spiritual attack.

I'm under the darkness of unfaithful friends, of bad circumstances, of shame, of guilt. Is any of that greater than the light of the Lord? Is any of it? You're in darkness. The room's so dark.

I feel like I'm enveloped with it. It's just dark all around. I don't know what to do.

Throw open the door, open up the window and walk in the light of the Lord. Spurgeon said on this verse, he said, if you were to go to Australia in a good sound ship, you would get there even if you were to lie down in the storage hold among the luggage and the rats. You'd still get to Australia.

But he says, I should like to go in a first class cabin. And I don't see why you and I, if we're going to heaven, should not go first class. Well, why not? And you might say, well, I'm going to barely hold on.

I'm going to love God through the midst of the darkness and hold on to my finger. You'll get to heaven. You're lying down in the luggage with all the rats.

Go up to your first class cabin, walk in the light of the Lord and just let the light of the Lord in on your life. It's sobering how much of the darkness and depression, discouragement in our lives we frankly choose. Because we won't choose anything other.

Walk in the light of the Lord. Now, verse six gets onto the sins that prevent them from walking in the light of the Lord. Look, it says, for you've forsaken your people, the house of Jacob, because they're filled with Eastern ways.

The soothsayers like the Philistines, they're pleased they're with their children of foreigners and their land is also full of silver and gold. There is no end to their treasures. Their land is also full of horses and there's no end to their chariots.

Their land is also full of idols. They worship the work of their own hands that their own fingers have made. People bow down and each man humbles himself.

Therefore, do not forgive them. Well, what's the problem? Well, first of all, they allowed the false gods of foreigners to captivate their attention. God says, put it away.

And then he says, the land's full of silver and gold. There's no end to their treasures, their horses. Well, things are great in the economy.

We don't have time to serve God and to love him. Hey, it's the economy, stupid, right? Everything's great. Well, you see the Jerusalem stock market, it's way up.

Great times, interest rates. Boy, everything's booming. God says, no, no, you're making it an idol.

It's going to fall down. The foreign idols, the booming economy, the land is full of idols. You're worshipping the work of your own hands, which your own fingers have made.

No, God says, put it all away. I think it's so interesting what's said in verse 9. It says, people bow down and each man humbles himself. Does that mean that in a good way in verse 9? No, people bow down and each man humbles himself.

Therefore, do not forgive them. Do you know what they're bowing down to? To idols. Do you know what they're humbling themselves to? Idolatry.

Friends, we know how to bow down. We know how to humble ourselves. Don't tell me you don't know how to bow down.

You made a fool over yourself going after that romantic relationship. You humbled yourself so you could get that girl. You wore clothes you'd never wear before.

You put smelly stuff on you never do. You got a haircut. You act like you never acted before.

Why? So you could get that girl. You humbled yourself. You know how to humble yourself.

You just don't want to do it to the Lord. You know how to bow down. You know how to humble yourself.

It's just you don't want to do it for your Lord God. You'll do it for your own selfish pleasure. You'll do it to get something you want.

You'll do it for some freaky religion. But you won't do it for the Lord your God. We're more than happy to bow down and humble ourselves for something of our own choosing.

But find it difficult to do it for the Lord. So what does God say? Don't forgive them. Their hearts turn to idols.

Wait till their heart turns to me. Look what it says. This is heavy.

Verse 10 through the end of the chapter here. Let's read this. You'll notice this as we go through the book of Isaiah.

I like to read chunks. I mean, I think that's where you get the power of it. When you see the force of what he's saying in a chunk.

I mean, this is verse 10. Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled.

The haughtiness of man shall be bowed down and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts will come upon everything proud and lofty upon everything lifted up and it should be brought low upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up and upon all the oaks of Bashan upon all the high mountains and upon all the hills that are lifted up upon every high tower and upon every fortified hill upon all the ships of Tarshish and upon all the beautiful sloops the loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low the Lord alone will be exalted in that day but the idols he shall utterly abolish. They shall go into the holes of the rocks and the caves of the earth from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake the earth mightily.

In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold which they have made for each one to worship to the moles and the bass to go in the clefts of the rocks and into the crags of the rugged rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake the earth mightily sever yourselves from such a man whose breath is in his nostrils for of what account is he? Isn't that cool? You know, the beginning of this chapter described the glory of the Messiah's reign. The second part of the chapter described the current corruption of Judah. Their idolatry, their materialism, their going after foreign gods.

So how is the Lord going to take it from the corruption to the glory of the Messiah's reign? Well, simple enough by the victory of the Messiah in the day of the Lord. Look at verse 12. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and long.

Now, the day of the Lord is not one day. It speaks of God's time. You see, the idea is the idea is that now is the day of man.

But the day of man is not going to last forever. One day, the Messiah is going to end the day of man and bring forth the day of the Lord. And that's when this is going to happen.

You see, in the day of the Lord, men will be terrified. They're going to hide in the rocks. They're going to hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty.

In the day of the Lord, men will be humbled. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. In that day, no more idolatry.

The Lord alone shall be exalted. In that day, God will be glorified and all will see the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. You got your high tower.

You got your fortified wall. You got your monuments of men. You got your financial centers.

You got your great shopping malls. You got all your economic prosperity, all your trade, all your infrastructure. It's gone.

In the day of the Lord, every proud, arrogant achievement of man will be humbled and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. You notice how that phrase was repeated three times in verses 10 through 22? It's amazing how proud man is and how God will humble man on the day of the Lord. Did you notice this in verse 20? It says, in that day, a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made for himself to worship, to the moles and bats.

In other words, in the day of the Lord, you're going to be sold. The idea is, you know, you're fleeing from your house. It's the day of the Lord.

So you're running for the hills. You're so scared. You're holding your idols.

Well, I've got my idols. You know, I've got my stocks and my bonds. I've got my pink slips.

I've got all my stuff. It's all my idol. Everything I love, everything I trust.

I'm running. Oh, God, I'm going to protect this. And you're running.

The day of the Lord's come and you got to hide in a little cave and a little crevice. And you know, you can't fit in with all your stuff. So you throw it to the moles and the bats.

And then you go hide in the cave. It's like God saying, you know what? You had to give that stuff up anyway, right? Why not just give it up to me now? And then you won't have to be afraid on the day of the Lord. You give it to me now and then you don't have to flee for terror on the day of the Lord.

I love verse 22. Sever yourselves from such a man whose breath is in his nostrils. For what account is he? You see, because the days of idolatry and human pride are numbered, right? That's the losing horse, my friends.

Those days are numbered. Why associate with those who cling to what's surely going to be defeated? We should see that such men are of no account and we should walk in the light of the Lord instead. What strange sin is in us to make us give more account to men who can only hold as much breath as their nostrils will contain? Okay, right now.

Okay, you got some breath in you right now, right? There you go. Hold it right there. What you got isn't enough.

That's how much breath you can hold at any moment. How long is that going to last you? A couple minutes? Tops. That's all you can hold.

You're a self-sustained system, right? Yeah, for about one minute, minute and a half, two minutes. Then you're dead. Past that minute and a half, two minutes, you depend on God for every breath that you breathe.

That's how much you can live in yourself. As much air as you can hold in your nostrils right now. Live it up right there.

Now, now, that's how you are. That's how I am. And I'm going to live my life to placate or to please you? Or you're going to do it to please me? What, are you kidding? Shouldn't we doing it to please God? Shouldn't He be the one we serve and love and honor and worship? And instead of trusting in and depending on and living for people who can only hold breath in their nostrils, that's it.

Why not trust in the Lord God who will shake the earth mightily? It just makes sense for us to honor or obey God rather than to follow men into sin. Then he concludes it there in verse 22. What a great question.

For what account is He? If men are only men, why do we give so much attention to the opinions of men? Why do we rise so high on the praise of men and get so low at their disapproval? We have something, someone better to live for. A couple of great quotes from Spurgeon here to kind of wrap it up. He's talking about this whole issue of, you know, why are you focused on people? But they say, well, what do they say? Let them say it will not hurt you if you can only gird up the loins of your mind and cease from man.

Oh, but they've accused me of this and that. Is it true? No, sir, it's not true. And that's why it grieves you.

That is why it should not grieve you. If it were true, it ought to trouble you. But if it's not true, let it alone.

If an enemy has said anything against your character, it will not always be worthwhile to answer him. Silence has both dignity and argument in it. And then he goes on.

This is so good. Brethren in Christ, let us think more of God and less of man. Come, let the Lord God fill the whole horizon of our thoughts.

Let our love for Him go forth. Let us delight ourselves in Him. Let us trust in Him that liveth forever.

In Him whose promise never faileth. In Him who will be with us in life and in death and through eternity. Oh, that we lived more in the society of Jesus, more in the sight of God.

Let man go behind our back and Satan too. We cannot spend our lives in seeking the smiles of men. For pleasing God is the one object we pursue.

Our hands, our heads and our hearts and all that we have in our find full occupation for the Lord. And therefore, we must sever ourselves from such a man. You know, my friends, the Lord put something so much greater before you than living for any person, including yourself.

He put something before you to live for the glory and the honor and majesty of Jesus. I want to lift your sights high above the petty living with the thoughts and the opinion and the will of others or worse yet for yourself. Set your minds and heart on living for the Lord God who shakes the earth.

Pray, Father, thank you for this word from the book of Isaiah. We want to come now tonight, Lord, and reason with you. We want you to reason with us, Lord God.

And we want you to captivate our hearts in the name of Jesus and help us to love you and praise you and honor you all the more. We love you, Lord. We honor you, Jesus.

We ask for your goodness and your grace to fill our lives in all things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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