

IS A I A H

shall come peace (2:40), and with peace the renewed fertility, and the free enjoyment of the fruits of such prosperity (1:19; 4:2; 30:23-26, etc.). Over all a wonderful light shall be shed, dispersing the people's gloom. Moreover, the nations shall willingly come to "Jerusalem" to be taught of Israel's God and His law.

I. PERVERSITY AND PROPHET - CHAPTERS 1 - 6

CHAPTER ONE

A. THE IMPEACHING ACCUSATION

1. CONTROVERSY DECLARED 1:1-20

a. JEHOVAH'S COMPLAINT

TEXT: 1:1-9

- 1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
- 2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.
- 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.
- 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! They have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward.
- 5 Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.
- 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil.
- 7 Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is

desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

- 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.
- 9 Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

QUERIES

- a. Why mention the fact that Uzziah was dead?
- b. Why compare people with animals?
- c. What sickness did the people have?

PARAPHRASE

These are the messages that came to Isaiah, son of Amoz, in the visions he saw during the reigns of King Uzziah, King Jotham, King Ahaz, and King Hezekiah—all kings of Judah. In these messages God showed him what was going to happen to Judah and Jerusalem in the days ahead. Listen, O heaven and earth, to what the Lord is saying: the children I raised and cared for so long and tenderly have turned against Me. Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care for them, but not My people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still don't care. Oh, what a sinful nation they are! They walk in reverse from the way I have asked them to walk. Their fathers before them were evil too. Born to be bad, they have turned their backs upon the Lord, and have despised the Holy One of Israel. They have cut themselves off from My help. Oh, my people, haven't you had enough of punishment? Why will you force Me to whip you again and again? Must you forever rebel? From head to foot you are sick and weak and faint, covered with bruises and welts and infected wounds, untreated and unbound. Your country lies in ruins; your cities are burned; while you watch, foreigners are destroying

and plundering everything they see. You stand there helpless and abandoned like a watchman's shanty in the field when the harvest time is over—or when the crop is stripped and robbed. If the Lord of Hosts had not stepped in to save a few of us, we would have been wiped out as Sodom and Gommorah were.

COMMENTS

v. 1 The first chapter is a prototype of the entire book. Contains the basic outline of the whole message: (a) sinfulness of Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 3-8); (b) appeals for repentance (vv. 16-19); (c) the coming judgment (vv. 24, 25, 29-31); (d) the blessings of the salvation to come (vv. 26, 27). The combined reigns of the four kings mentioned covered some 81 years. II Chron. 32:32 suggests that Isaiah may have outlived Hezekiah. The prophecy concerns the destinies of Judah and Jerusalem—not the Second Coming of Christ—the preservation of the covenant people and points toward a fulfillment in the First Advent of Christ.

v. 2 Jehovah's complaint is expressed in terms of Fatherhood (Cf. Hosea 11:1-7). When God chose Israel she was a small and insignificant people. He reared her and nourished her to a position of eminence and exaltation through special gifts and protections. Then she rebelled against Him and spurned His love (Cf. Ezek. 16:1-63).

v. 3 This sin on the part of Israel is unnatural. It is animalistic, brutish, unreasoning. They behave worse than the most unintelligent, instinctive brute, for even the ass and the ox know enough to know who feeds them. Men often allow sin to degrade them; they behave worse than animals (Cf. Hosea 10:11-12; Jer. 5:8; II Pet. 2:12; Psa. 73:22; Isa. 56:9-12; Rom. 1:18-32). When men "exchange the truth of God for a lie and serve the creature rather than the Creator" they "live in the passions of their flesh," following the (animal) desires of body and mind" (Cf. Eph. 2:1-3). Evolutionism as a philosophy teaches that man has no Creator and such a philosophy is responsible for much of the animalistic behavior of men and women in our age.

v. 4 Notice the sins of which they were guilty: Inconsiderate-

ness; Sins of their forefathers (grumbling, idolatry, etc.); Crooked dealing; Forsaking the Lord; Going backward (backsliding); Reducing their worship to a mere formality; Despising the Holy One of Israel. Unbelief usually first manifests itself in the sin of Ingratitude (Inconsiderateness) (Rom. 1:21; Deut. 8:11-20; I Cor. 10:1-10).

v. 5 It amazes the Lord that in spite of the afflictions He has allowed to come upon them, they persist in the hard way of the transgressor. (Cf. Ezek. 33:10-11) So useless, uncalled for, but as long as they continue in sin they will be stricken. Jesus "marvelled" at the unbelief of the people of His home town (Mk. 6:6). With all the advantages, liberties, and blessings of people in countries where the Gospel has been preached for centuries, it is nothing short of amazing to behold the unbelief, ingratitude and despising of the Holy God.

v. 6 What is the explanation? The head is sick and diseased. The intellectual and moral life of the nation is diseased. They think wrong, because they love sin (Cf. John 3:18-20). "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," (Prov. 14:34). You cannot *think* wrong and *be* right! "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," (Prov. 23:7). The malignant cancer of sin is in all four receptacles of the heart (intellect; emotions; will; conscience). The whole man is diseased! The immortal heart pours its poison to every facet of life.

v. 7 Note the use of both figurative and literal language. The country is desolate and literally burned with fire because of the spiritual conditions described figuratively. Desolation—burned cities—foreigners occupying their farms. Who the invaders were we do not know for certain. Possibilities: Edomites and Philistines who invaded Judea in the time of Ahaz; Israelites under Amaziah; Assyrians under Sargon.

v. 8 Because of this condition Jerusalem is left humiliated like a frail, lonely, neglected watchman's shack in a vineyard or a cucumber patch. She was surrounded by her enemies and cut off from the rest of the nations like a besieged city.

v. 9 But there is one hope—a remnant, literally, a very small number which remains righteous and thus saved from the coming

judgment. Only a few thousand remained faithful through the captivity and returned to restore the commonwealth of the covenant people with Ezra, Nehemiah, et al. Had it not been for this faithful remnant, Judah and Jerusalem would have been utterly obliterated like Sodom and Gomorrah. Ed. J. Young says, "Whereas, however, the delay of judgment also involves postponement of blessing, nevertheless the fact of the choice of the remnant is evidence that God is fulfilling His purposes in history. Here, then, is the true philosophy of history. It is because of the righteous remnant that the world remains. The wickedness of the world is permitted to continue until, in the counsel of God's infinite wisdom, the time of punishment has come. That time is delayed for God is truly the God of the heathen also, a God of longsuffering and mercy. At the same time, in that delay, the delay of the full accomplishment of the blessing is also involved. The preserving of a remnant, however, is a step toward the fulfillment of the promise of blessing." This applies to the blessings of redemption fulfilled in the First Coming of Christ and applies to the redemption and ultimate salvation to be fulfilled in the Second Coming of Christ.

QUIZ

1. How many years are spanned by the four kings who reigned during Isaiah's ministry?
2. What makes men act like animals?
3. What is usually the first sign of unbelief?
4. Where does spiritual sickness start?
5. What is a "booth" in a vineyard?
6. Who is the "remnant" remaining?

b. JEHOVAH'S CORRECTION

TEXT: 1:10-17

- 10 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.
- 11 What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.
- 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts?
- 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with; it is iniquity and the solemn meeting.
- 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them.
- 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.
- 16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;
- 17 Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

QUERIES

- a. Is God here contradicting His commandments to make sacrifices?
- b. Does God really refuse to hear anyone's prayer?
- c. How were the people to "wash" themselves clean?

PARAPHRASE

An apt comparison! Listen, you leaders of Israel, you men of

Sodom and Gomorrah, as I call you now. Listen to the Lord. Hear what he is telling you! I am sick of your sacrifices. Don't bring Me any more of them. I don't want your fat rams; I don't want to see the blood from your offerings. Who wants your sacrifices when you have no sorrow for your sins? The incense you bring Me is a stench in my nostrils. Your holy celebrations of the new moon and sabbath, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—all are frauds! I want nothing more to do with them. I hate them all; I can't stand the sight of them.

From now on, when you pray with your hands stretched out to heaven, I won't look or listen. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear, for your hands are those of murderers; they are covered with the blood of your innocent victims.

O, wash yourselves! Be clean! Let Me no longer see you doing all these wicked things; quit your evil ways. Learn to do good, to be fair and to help the poor, the fatherless and widows.

COMMENTS

v. 10 **THE CALL TO CONSIDER:** Be still and give attention for it is Jehovah who speaks. One does not truly hear God's Word unless he obeys that word (Cf. Jas. 1:22). Until a person is in an attitude of willingness to do the Lord's will, he cannot know it (Cf. John 17:17). If one does not obey, it is as though he had not even heard.

v. 11-15 **THE FALSE APPROACH:** Sacrifices without their heart in them. Sacrifices without faith in the One (God) to whom they were supposedly being offered. Ceremony without obedience (Cf. I Sam. 15:22; Jer. 6:16-20; Amos 5:21-24). To worship without doing God's commandments in the rest of life is no true worship, and any ritual of worship without faith is a hollow mockery. All that is done in a religious way if it is not accompanied with faith in the Person of God is vain and offensive to God (Cf. Matt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23). Without faith it is *impossible* to please God! And, of course, worshipping Him in

violation of any expressed commandment is to make void the Word of God. Worship and sacrifice and solemn assembly, without faith, becomes a "weariness" to God—it vexes His innermost soul—it disgusts Him. Who required of them such a steady stream of traffic in faithless sacrifices? Not God! They willfully forced these rituals upon Him. He loathed them. Their worship and their living were incongruous—they did not go together—because iniquity and solemn assembly are totally incompatible. God was fed up with them, sick of them, tired of them and would "spew them out of His mouth" (Cf. Rev. 3:16). They were there in bodily presence but their hearts were far from Him. This is totally unacceptable to God. Goodness, love and faith begins in the mind and heart—this is what God wants!

v. 16-17 **THE TRUE APPROACH:** Get your heart right! Wash, cleanse, repent! The O.T. abounds in the use of the figure of washing to refer to repentance (Cf. Psa. 51:2, 7; Jer. 4:14; Ezek. 36:24-26; Zech. 13:1). Repentance is the condition which God demands in order to work His cleansing in man, (Cf. I Pet. 1:22-23). Repentance is: "ceasing to do evil—learning (become skilled in) to do well." Doing well is: being just and seeing that justice is given; correcting and chastening the oppressor; championing the orphans' cause and that of the widow. God cannot even be approached by man unless man is in an attitude of repentance (change of mind). Wm. Chamberlain, in his book, *The Meaning Of Repentance*, defines repentance: "A pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ." Repentance is surrender; a change of thinking, willing, acting; a life directed toward the will of God as revealed in His Word.

QUIZ

1. When does one hear the Word of God?
2. Why is worship without faith unacceptable to God?
3. What is God's attitude toward faithless sacrifice?
4. Why must worship and manner of life go together?
5. When does God cleanse us?

6. What is repentance?
7. How is repentance manifested in one's life?

c. JEHOVAH'S CALL

TEXT: 1:18-20

- 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
- 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:
20 but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

QUERIES

- a. Is God's invitation to "reason together" an invitation to us to help Him decide our means of being saved?
- b. Does obedience save a man?

PARAPHRASE

Come! Think about this matter! says the Lord; no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool! If you will only be willing to let Me help you, if you will only obey, then I will make you rich. But if you keep on turning your backs and refusing to listen to Me, you will be killed by your enemies; I, the Lord, have spoken.

COMMENTS

v. 18 THE INVITATION: Come is in the imperative—a command. The invitation is to think—not to make any decisions about the means of one's salvation. God alone can lay down the arbitrary conditions for salvation, for He is infinitely knowledgeable, wise, loving and powerful. On the basis of past *historical* demonstrations of God's omniscience and omnipotence, man is commanded to come and use his mind to remember, to think, to reason. If God has been absolutely faithful in keeping His word in the past, it should stand to reason that He will do so in the future. Man must think God's thoughts—man must conform his thinking to the revealed thoughts of God in order to be reasonable. To be reasonable is to obey the commands which God has given and the promises He has made. All sin and rebellion, whether in deed or thinking, is unreasonable. "Come to your right mind, and sin no more" (I Cor. 15:34). ". . . they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened . . . claiming to be wise, they became fools . . ." (Rom. 1:21-22). ". . . irrational animals . . ." (II Pet. 2:10-13). In the light of the historically established evidence and the pragmatic proof of the commandments and promises of God's Word, unbelief is irrational, unreasonable and immoral. Only God knows where man came from, what man's purpose in existing is, and what man's destiny is. All other thinking about these ultimates, unless conformed to God's revealed thinking, is irrational and untrue.

v. 18 THE PROMISE: The bloodiest sin can be erased and the sinner transformed into such purity as the whitest snow or wool. God pardons the penitent sinner vicariously and judicially. That is, the sinner does not merit his own pardon. When the sinner turns to God in faith, trust and repentance, God forgives and erases his past and pronounces him righteous, even though the sinner himself could never do enough or be perfect enough to earn this forgiveness. Lest anyone should think, however, that this was an offer of unconditional pardon, whether there was faith or repentance or obedience on the part of the sinner, the

Lord immediately calls the attention of the nation to the need for repentance and obedience.

v. 19-20 **THE ALTERNATIVE:** The alternative to blessing is curse! God wants willing obedience—not the obedience of force. One translation has it: “If ye be willing and hearken . . .” To hearken is to obey. “If any man hears these words of mine and does them, he is like the wise man. . . .” “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man . . .” (Matt. 7:24-27). The alternative to salvation is destruction. Such alternatives are inevitable in a moral universe!

QUIZ

1. Is God inviting man to help Him figure out how to save man?
2. What is God inviting man to do? .
3. Why is sin unreasonable?
4. How is man pardoned from his sin?
5. What is the alternative to pardon?
6. Does one have to obey the Word of God to truly hear it?

2. THE JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED 1:21-31

a. REASON FOR JUDGMENT, THE CORRUPT CITY

TEXT: 1:21-23

- 21 How is the faithful city become a harlot! she that was full of justice! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.
- 22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water
- 23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

QUERIES

- a. Why use the word "harlot" to describe Jerusalem?
- b. Why the condemnation of the "princes"?

PARAPHRASE

Jerusalem, once My faithful wife! And now a prostitute! Running after other gods. Once the city of Fair Play, but now a gang of murderers. Once like sterling silver; now mixed with worthless alloy! Once so pure, but now diluted like watered-down wine! Your leaders are rebels, companions of thieves; all of them take bribes and won't defend the widows and orphans.

COMMENTS

v. 21 JERUSALEM HAD BECOME A HARLOT: a profligate, sensual, mercenary city, worshipping idols. It was no longer wed to God, sharing His nature and His goals. People make up a city. The city is what the people make it. Some cities have parks, flowers, trees, churches, justice and peace some have saloons, brothels, gambling halls, law-breaking and fear. The spirit of harlotry is the spirit of promiscuousness (see our comments on Hosea, in *Minor Prophets*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press). Jerusalem left her first love and prostituted herself to pagan idolatry (which is in reality selling oneself to Satan who exploits for his own prideful purposes anyone who will do so).

v. 21 WISDOM AND JUSTICE WERE LOST: Justice and righteousness had found permanent residence in Jerusalem before (probably in the days of David and Solomon, I Kings 3:9-28; II Chron. 19:5-11, or the days of Jehoshaphat). Jerusalem had been known throughout the world for her wise and just men—but now she was known for her profligacy, injustice and murderers.

v. 22 GREAT MEN HAVE BECOME CONTAMINATED: Silver represents nobility—but it had been mixed with "dross" (the scum

or refuse matter thrown off from molten ore or metal). Her great men had deteriorated. They had been weakened by mixing in sin like wine is weakened when mixed with water. The further a nation gets from God, the harder to find men with elements of greatness; faith, vision, initiative, moral integrity, humility, unselfishness. When a nation allows its young men to be taught unbelief and sin, its noble manhood is weakened to little men with enlarged egos—self-serving, greedy, stupid men, drunk with the intoxication of their self-importance.

v. 23 **REBELLIOUS PRINCES:** The royal household (princes) were in rebellion against the true king (God). The princes were companions of thieves—in league with criminals, involved in bribery and graft. Men sworn to uphold law and decency using their position and power to defraud the very people they are supposed to govern and protect. They are greedy shepherds devouring the flock over which they have been made overseers (Cf. Ezek. 34; John 10). They use the law for lawless purposes—for selfish ends. Could such a scathing condemnation be true of some of the leaders of God's kingdom (the Church) today? Unquestionably!

QUIZ

1. What makes a city a "harlot"?
2. What does Satan do with those who prostitute themselves spiritually?
3. In what era was Jerusalem known for righteousness and justice?
4. What does silver symbolize?
5. What is the figurative picture induced by "water-weakened wine"?
6. In what way were the princes rebelling?

b. THE RESULTS OF JUDGMENT, A CLEANSED CITY

TEXT: 1:24-31

- 24 Therefore saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies;
- 25 and I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin;
- 26 and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called The City of Righteousness, a faithful town.
- 27 Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness.
- 28 But the destruction of transgressors and sinners shall be together, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed.
- 29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.
- 30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.
- 31 And the strong shall be as two, and his work as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

QUERIES

- a. When is this "purging" of the city to take place?
- b. Who are the "converts" of Zion?
- c. What are the "oaks" they desired?

PARAPHRASE

Therefore the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, says: I will pour out My anger on you, My enemies! I Myself will melt you in a smelting pot, and skim off your slag. And afterwards

I will give you good judges and wise counsellors like those you used to have. Then your city shall again be called "The City of Justice," and "The Faithful Town." Those who return to the Lord, who are just and good, shall be redeemed. (But all sinners shall utterly perish, for they refuse to come to Me.) Shame will cover you, and you will blush to think of all those times you sacrificed to idols in your groves of "sacred" oaks. You will perish like a withered tree or a garden without water. The strongest among you will disappear like burning straw; your evil deeds are the spark that sets the straw on fire, and no one will be able to put it out.

COMMENTS

v. 24-27 RESTORATION: The impenitent sinner is the enemy of Almighty God! The sinner is a burden to God—the sinner's rebellion is unreasonable and unjust in the light of God's love. Therefore God is justified in avenging Himself of impenitent rebels. But in the process God's wrath also works chastening, repentance and purification of some. Smelting silver ore is a radical process; purifying sinners is a radical process demanding the death of self! But when the purification has been accomplished, the beauty and utility of the finished product is well worth enduring the crucible. The promises given in verses 26-27 are not that of mere restoration of physical conditions, but the introduction of new conditions that never, in their fullest sense, prevailed before. There may be some temporary reference to the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth after the exile, but this restored commonwealth was only typical of the Messianic kingdom to come, so that the fundamental meaning of the prophecy is that there will come a time, typified by the former reign of David (righteousness and justice) in which true righteousness and justice will be found, namely, the Messianic Age (Cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-9ff; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24, etc.). This purifying reign of justice and righteousness would be accomplished by the redemption wrought through Jesus Christ (Cf. Lk.

1:67-79; Acts 13:34-40; Titus 2:11-14). The "converts" of Zion are Christians, both Jew and Gentile, of the N.T. Church.

v. 28-31 REPROBATION: The doom of the apostates. They will reap what they have sown—they will be paid shameful, confounding, condemning wages for their shameful, confounding, condemning deeds (Cf. Rom. 6:20-23; Gal. 6:7-9; Rom. 1:18-32, etc.). Those who turn to dumb idols will one day be brought face to face with the brutal reality that their false gods are dumb, impotent and useless—and they will be ashamed. The "oak groves" where they set up idols to worship would incriminate them in their shameful apostacy—places they would like to forget when God's judgment begins to fall. The nation would be seared and withered by the heat of God's wrath as well as by their own spiritual starvation. They would not be like a tree planted by the water (Psa. 1:1-6). They would be as the "tow" (the coarse and broken part of flax) used for burning. All of man's strength—whether intellectual or physical—will be consumed and disappear as rapidly as tow when God's judgment breaks out. This judgment is much more than the exile and captivity. The sin, spiritual in nature, if not forgiven, will be rewarded with spiritual punishment—eternal punishment in Hell.

QUIZ

1. Why is God justified in condemning impenitent sinners?
2. What does God's judgment work upon those who trust Him?
3. What is the goal or fulfillment in the ultimate sense of the promises of Zion's redemption? Prove it!
4. Who are Zion's converts?
5. What is the destiny of the enemies of God?
6. How helpful is the strength of man's intellectual abilities when the wrath of God begins to fall?