

# Isaiah 01 - The Great Indictment Against Israel

## I. Prophecies of condemnation (Is 1:1–35:10)

### (1) Condemnation of Judah (Is 1:1–12:6)

#### (A) Book of hardening (Is 1:1–6:13)

##### (a) Isaiah's background (1:1)

###### (i) What: vision (1:1a)

###### (ii) Where: Judah and Jerusalem (1:1b)

###### (iii) Who: Isaiah son of Amoz (1:1c)

###### (iv) When: During the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (1:1d)

##### (b) Sins (1:2-31)

###### (i) Rebellion (1:2-9)

###### (a) Sin (1:2-4)

###### (b) Judgment (1:5-8)

###### (c) Blessing: remnant (1:9)

###### (ii) Empty religion (1:10-20)

###### (a) Sin (1:10-15)

###### (b) Judgment (1:20)

###### (c) Blessing: covenant renewal (1:16-19)

###### (iii) Jerusalem's injustice (1:21-31)

###### (a) Sin (1:21-23)

###### (b) Judgment (1:24-25)

###### (c) Blessing: Zion's redemption (1:26-31)

## Isaiah 1

### The Vision of Isaiah

1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

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1 This is the vision that Amoz's son Isaiah had about Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

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.

- This introduces the entire book—not just this section (Cf. 2 Chr 32:32)

## Chronology

- 767-740 BC - Uzziah (2 Kings 15:1-5; 2 Chr 26:1-23)
- 740-736 BC - Jotham (2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chr 27:1-9)
- 736-716 BC - Ahaz (2 Kings 16:1-20; 2 Chr 28:1-27)
- 716-687 BC - Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-20:21)
- 686-642 BC - Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chr 33:1-20)

The reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah covered a total of 81 years. Isaiah's ministry began in the year of the death of Uzziah, 739 BC until some time in the reign of Hezekiah; his last public act was possibly in the year of the visit of the Babylonian envoys. He may have composed the last 27 chapters in retirement.

- Isaiah may have outlived Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:32)
- The last dated event is the 14th year of Hezekiah: 701 BC
  - All Calendars changed that year. More on this later
- Jewish tradition: Isaiah was put to death during the reign of Manasseh
  - Sawed in half? (Heb 11:37)

## Israel's Sin and Punishment (1:2-9)

### God's Case Against Israel (v2-4)

2 Listen, heavens, and hear, earth; For the LORD has spoken: **"Sons I have raised and brought up,** But they have revolted against Me.

2 Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me.

2 Listen, you heavens, and let the earth pay attention, because the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them to adulthood, but then they rebelled against me.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

- "...Sons I have raised and brought up" - Isaiah immediately introduces the concept of the Lord's "Fatherhood" over His chosen people (Cf. Ex 4:22; Deut 1:31; 8:5; 32:6; Is 3:16; Jer 3:19; Hosea 11:1; Mal 1:6)

-- The first explicit occurrence of this concept in the Bible is Ex 4:22

3 "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, *But Israel does not know, My people do not understand.*"

3 "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, *But Israel does not know, My people do not understand.*"

3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding trough, but Israel doesn't know, and my people don't understand.

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

4 Oh, sinful nation, People weighed down with guilt, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have **turned** away from Him.

4 Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him.

4 "Oh, you sinful nation! You people burdened down by iniquity! You offspring of those who keep practicing what is evil! You corrupt children! "They've abandoned the LORD; they've despised the Holy One of Israel; in their estrangement, they've walked away from me.

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

- "...turned" - alienated, separated; Lit. "have gone back"

### **The Desolation of Israel (v5-9)**

5 Where will you be stricken again, As you continue in *your* rebellion? The entire head is sick And the entire heart is faint.

5 Where will you be stricken again, As you continue in *your* rebellion? The whole head is sick And the whole heart is faint.

5 "Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? Your whole head is sick, and your whole heart is faint.

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing healthy in it, *Only* bruises, slashes, and raw wounds; Not pressed out nor bandaged, Nor softened with oil.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, *Only* bruises, welts and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil.

6 From the sole of your foot to the top of your head, there's no soundness evident— only bruises, sores, and festering wounds that haven't been cleaned out, bandaged, or treated with oil."

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

7 Your land is **desolate**, Your cities are burned with fire; As for your fields, strangers are devouring them in front of you; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.

7 Your land is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire, Your fields—strangers are devouring them in your presence; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.

7 "Your country lies desolate; your cities have been incinerated. Before your very eyes, foreigners are devouring your land— they've brought devastation on it, while the land is overthrown by foreigners.

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.

- "...desolate" - total destruction (Deut 29:22; Amos 9:11; Is 13; Jer 50)

8 The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a city under watch.

8 The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

8 "The daughter of Zion is left abandoned, like a booth in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, or like a city under siege.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

- Quoted by Paul (Rom 9:29)

9 If the LORD of armies Had not left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah.

9 Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah.

9 If the LORD of the Heavenly Armies hadn't left us a few survivors, we would be like Sodom; we would be like Gomorrah.

9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

### **The Futility of Formalism in Worship (1:10-17)**

#### **Ineffectual Worship (v10-15)**

10 Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of **Sodom**; Listen to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah!

10 Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah.

10 "Listen to what the LORD says, you rulers of Sodom, and pay attention to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

- "...Sodom" - Jerusalem (Cf. Rev 11:18)

11 "What are your many sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fattened cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.

11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.

11 "How do your voluminous sacrifices benefit me?" the LORD is asking. "I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts. I don't enjoy the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full 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 you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courtyards?

12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

12 "When you come to present yourselves in my presence, who has required you to trample on my courts?

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 "Do not go on bringing your worthless offerings, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the proclamation of an assembly— I cannot endure wrongdoing and the festive assembly.

13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

13 Stop bringing useless offerings! Incense is detestable to me, as are your New Moons, Sabbaths, and calling of convocations. I cannot stand iniquity within a solemn assembly.

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 "I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am tired of bearing *them*.

14 "I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing *them*.

14 As for your New Moons and your appointed festivals, I abhor them. They've become a burden to me; I've grown weary of carrying that burden.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

15 "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you offer many prayers, I will not be listening. Your hands are covered with blood.

15 "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

15 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I'll hide my eyes from you. Even though you pray repeatedly, I won't listen. Your hands are full of blood, your fingers drenched with iniquity."

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.

### **Effectual Worship (v16-17)**

16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil,

16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil,

16 "Wash yourselves, and make yourselves clean; remove your evil behavior from my presence; stop practicing what is evil.

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 good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor, Obtain justice for the orphan, Plead for the widow's case.

17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

17 Learn to practice what is good; seek justice, alleviate oppression, defend orphans in court, and plead the widow's case.

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

- After the negative exhortation of the preceding verse, Isaiah now gives five positive exhortations, the first of which lays the foundation or groundwork for the remainder

After beginning with a 17-verse litany of Israel's sins, the Lord had Isaiah plead with the people for a rational discussion of their alternatives. The choice is clear. Willingly obey and be blessed, or resist and rebel and be devoured. This choice was offered them in advance of the Babylonian conquest and it is being offered now.

In Old Covenant times, two goats were brought before the High Priest on Yom Kippur. One was a peace offering and the other was the scapegoat. As the High Priest symbolically transferred the sins of the people to the scapegoat, a scarlet ribbon was tied from the goat's horn to a door of the Temple. When the High Priest was finished, the ribbon was cut and the scapegoat was led outside the city into the wilderness where it was pushed off a cliff. At the moment of the goat's death, the portion of the ribbon that remained tied to the Temple door turned from scarlet to white in fulfillment of Is 1:18. This was the sign that the Lord had accepted the sin offering and the peace offering could be made. The nation would be at peace with God for another year.

After the crucifixion, the Yom Kippur ceremony was repeated every year until the Temple was destroyed, but the ribbon never changed color again. The Lord was both our scapegoat and our peace offering and had fulfilled the Yom Kippur prophecy in His death. He has taken away our sins (John 1:29) and He is our peace (Eph 2:14). The shadow had given way to the reality (Heb 10:1) and was no longer effective.

### **Call to Reason (v18-20)**

**18** "Come now, and let us **debate your case**," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They shall become as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be like wool.

**18** "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

18 "Please come, and let's reason together," implores the LORD. "Even though your sins are like scarlet, they'll be white like snow. Though they're like crimson, they'll become like wool.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

- "...debate your case" - "reason together" or "reach an understanding"; grace includes full amnesty

19 "If you are willing and obedient, You will eat the best of the land;

19 "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;

19 If you're willing and obedient, you'll eat the best that the land produces;

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

20 "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

20 but if you refuse and rebel, you'll be devoured by the sword, because the LORD has spoken."

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

### **Desolation of Jerusalem (v21-23)**

21 How the faithful city has become a prostitute, She who was full of justice!

Righteousness once dwelt in her, But now murderers.

21 How the faithful city has become a harlot, She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers.

21 "How the faithful city has become a whore, she who used to be filled with justice!

Righteousness used to reside within her, but now only murderers live there.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

22 Your silver has become waste matter, Your drink diluted with water.

22 Your silver has become dross, Your drink diluted with water.

22 Your silver has become dross, your best wine is diluted with water.

22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

23 Your rulers are rebels And companions of thieves; Everyone loves a bribe And chases after gifts. They do not obtain justice for the orphan, Nor does the widow's case come before them.

23 Your rulers are rebels And companions of thieves; Everyone loves a bribe And chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, Nor does the widow's plea come before them.

23 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. All of them are lovers of bribes and are runners after gifts. They don't bring justice to orphans, and the widow's case never comes up for review in their court."

23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

- Isaiah now gives the explanation for the figures of speech he has employed

— Since corruption of a nation generally begins with its rulers, Isaiah singles these out for denunciation...v24-31 announces the coming judgment.

### **Israel Judged and Redeemed (v24-31)**

**24** Therefore the Lord GOD of armies, The Mighty One of Israel, declares, "Ah, I will have satisfaction against My adversaries, And avenge Myself on My enemies.

**24** Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts, The Mighty One of Israel, declares, "Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries And avenge Myself on My foes.

**24** Therefore this is what the Lord GOD of the Heavenly Armies, the one who is Israel's Mighty One, declares: "Now I'll get relief from his enemies and avenge myself on his foes.

**24** Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

25 "I will also turn My hand against you, And smelt away your impurities as with lye; And I will remove all your slag.

25 "I will also turn My hand against you, And will smelt away your dross as with lye And will remove all your alloy.

25 When I turn my attention to you, I'll refine your dross as in a furnace. I'll remove all your alloy.

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

26 "Then I will restore your judges as at first, And your counselors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city."

26 "Then I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city."

26 Let me restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you'll be called 'The Righteous City' and 'The Faithful City of Zion'.

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, the faithful city.

27 Zion will be redeemed with justice And her repentant ones with righteousness.

27 Zion will be redeemed with justice And her repentant ones with righteousness.

27 "Zion will be redeemed by justice, and her repentant ones by righteousness.

27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

28 But wrongdoers and sinners together will be broken, And those who abandon the LORD will come to an end.

28 But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, And those who forsake the LORD will come to an end.

28 Rebels and sinners will be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD will be consumed.

28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

29 You certainly will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired, And you will be embarrassed by the gardens which you have chosen.

29 Surely you will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired, And you will be embarrassed at the gardens which you have chosen.

29 They'll be ashamed of the oak trees that you desired; and you'll blush because of the gardens that you have chosen.

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 you will be like an oak whose leaf withers away, Or like a garden that has no water.

30 For you will be like an oak whose leaf fades away Or as a garden that has no water.

30 You'll be like an oak whose leaf is withering, like an unwatered garden.

30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

31 The strong man will become *like* flax fiber, And his work a spark. So they shall both burn together And there will be no one to extinguish *them*.

31 The strong man will become tinder, His work also a spark. Thus they shall both burn together And there will be none to quench *them*.

31 Your strong one will be like tinder, and your work a spark; both of them will burn together, with no one to quench the flames that burn them."

31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

## The Broader Relevance

- God had called a special people to represent Him
- They had become apostate, and failed
- The enemies of God are represented by Assyria and Babylon
- God's judgment(s) and ultimate restoration are depicted and are surprisingly relevant to God's people today