

January 7, 2018

“God Has Had Enough”

Isaiah 1

Focal Passage: Isaiah 1:1-20 (NASB)

Cross References: Leviticus 26:14-26; Deuteronomy 30:15-16; Nehemiah 1:4-11; Psalm 50; 51:7-11; Proverbs 1:20-33; Jeremiah 44:2-11; Amos 5:21-24; Malachi 1:6-14; Romans 8:20-22; 9:27-33; 1 John 1:9-10

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Jan 1 Genesis 1-3	Jan 2 Genesis 4-7
Jan 3 Genesis 8-11	Jan 4 Genesis 12-15
Jan 5 Genesis 16-18	Jan 6 Genesis 19-21
Jan 7 Genesis 22-24	

SPECIAL NOTE FROM BRO STAN:

This year in Sunday School, we are going to attempt to study the book of Isaiah. There are 66 chapters in this great prophetic writing, and only 52 weeks in the year. Moreover, some of the chapters are quite long, which means that we will not be able to hit every verse in detail. I strongly encourage each member of our Sunday School classes to use these take-home sheets for your own personal study of the book during the week. That way, you will be familiar with all that Isaiah is trying to say, because there is no way that your Sunday School teacher will be able to teach every verse. I recommend to the teachers to center in on the parts of each lesson that will be most beneficial to your classes week by week.

ONE OTHER THING: On Sunday, January 21st all of the youth and adult classes will meet together in the Worship Center. Dr. Deron Biles, Professor of Old Testament and Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will be with us for Sunday School and Worship to lead an overview of the entire book of Isaiah. He will help us understand the background and setting for Isaiah, as well as share with us the major themes of the book. It should be very informative and inspirational as we begin this biblical undertaking.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- God condemns evil behavior in His people.
- God is our only source of hope.

- Our religious practices do not win us favor with God.
- God desires holy living more than outward acts of religion.
- Our prayers are hindered by evil in our lives.
- God reaches out to call His children to reason.
- Only God can bring cleansing for our sin. He did it once for all through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lesson Idea: We need to recognize and repent from our rebellion against God and come to Him for cleansing.

Isaiah 1:1-17 Rebellion of God's People

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.

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.

3 “An ox knows its owner,
And a donkey its master’s manger,
But Israel does not know,
My people do not understand.”

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.

5 Where will you be stricken again,
As you continue in your rebellion?

The whole head is sick
And the whole heart is faint.

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.

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.

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.

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

DISCUSSION:

- v 1. What is the significance of Isaiah saying that this came as a "vision?" What is significant about Isaiah serving during the reigns of four different kings?

NOTE: The reigns of these four kings can be found in 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 26-32. This is good background material for understanding the life and times of Isaiah.

- V 2-3. How do the heavens and the earth "listen?" Why should they listen? What sons had God brought up, and how had they revolted against Him? What analogy does God use in vs 3 to show the ignorance and obstinance of His people? Is this still true of His people today? Why or why not?
- V 4. What was wrong with the nation? How is this true of the church today? (see Nehemiah's prayer of contrition for Israel in Nehemiah 1:4-11)
- V 5-7. What was the result of God's people's rebellion? How does sin affect both the people and the land? Why? (see Leviticus 26:14-26; Jeremiah 44:2-11; Romans 8:20-22)
- V 8-9. How do these verses describe the hopelessness of the situation? What is the only hope for God's people? What are we like without God? (see Romans 9:27-33)

Isaiah 1:10-20 God Has Had Enough

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

*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.

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

*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.*

14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts,

*They have become a burden to Me;
I am weary of bearing them.*

*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.

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

Cease to do evil,

17 Learn to do good;

Seek justice,

Reprove the ruthless,

Defend the orphan,

Plead for the widow.

"Let Us Reason"

*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.

19 "If you consent and obey,

You will eat the best of the land;

20 "But if you refuse and rebel,

You will be devoured by the sword."

Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

DISCUSSION:

- v 10-11. How would God's people have felt to be called "Sodom and Gomorrah?" God's people thought that the Temple and the sacrificial system brought them close to God... but what did God say about their religious worship services? Why?
- V 12. What does it mean to "trample" God's courts? How could we be guilty of doing that today?

- V 13-14. God had prescribed all of these acts of worship and assemblies in His Law given through Moses -- Why does He say they have become a “burden” to Him? (see Psalm 50; Amos 5:21-24; Malachi 1:6-14)
- V 15. How would you feel if God told you He would no longer listen to your prayers? (see Proverbs 1:20-33; Isaiah 59:1-2) How were their hands covered with blood?
- V 16. How were they to “wash” themselves and make themselves “clean?” (see Psalm 51:7-11; 1 John 1:9-10)
- V 17. What did God desire them to do instead of evil? Why?
- V 18. This is one of the sweetest invitations in the Bible. What does God call His people to do with Him? What does He promise to do **for** them?
- V 19-20. What conditions and results (*if... then* statements) does God assure His people will happen to them? (see Deuteronomy 30:15-16)

APPLICATION:

- ✓ How well do you listen when the Lord speaks? Why?
- ✓ How well does God enjoy your sacrifices of worship, or how much do they burden Him? Why?

Lesson by Bro Stan

NOTES:

from David Guzik (Enduring Word Commentary)

Isaiah 1:

V 1. **The vision of Isaiah:** This is the book of the prophesies of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who ministered from about 740 to 680 b.c. For about 20 years, he spoke to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. After Israel’s fall to the Assyrians in 722 b.c., Isaiah continued to prophesy to Judah.

i. This period of Israel’s history is told in 2 Kings 15 through 21 and 2 Chronicles 26 through 33. Isaiah was a contemporary of the prophets Hosea and Micah. By the time of Isaiah, the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, and Amos had already completed their ministry.

ii. By this time, 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 raised up as the occasion demanded. Then, for about 120 years, three kings reigned over all Israel: Saul, David, and Solomon. But in 917 b.c. Israel had a civil war, and remained divided into two nations, Israel (to the north) and Judah (to the south) up until the time of Isaiah.

iii. Up until the time of Isaiah, the northern nation of Israel had some 18 kings – all of them bad, and rebellious against the Lord. The southern nation of Judah had some 11 kings before Isaiah’s ministry, some good and some bad.

iv. In the time of Isaiah, Israel was a little nation often caught in the middle of the wars between three superpowers: Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

v. 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. During the span of his ministry as a prophet, the southern nation of Judah was faced with repeated threats from the larger surrounding nations.

...The New Testament quotes Isaiah by name more than all the other writing prophets combined. . . The name Isaiah means *Salvation is of the Lord*. There are at least seven men by the name of Isaiah in the Bible, but only one is Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

We know more about Isaiah than we do many other of the prophets. Isaiah was married and was the father of at least two sons (Isaiah 7:3 and 8:3). He lived in Jerusalem (Isaiah 7:3, 22:1, 37:2, 38:5, and 39:3).

V 7. **Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence:** During the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah, they were attacked and pillaged by Israel, Syria, Edom, the Philistines, and Assyria (2 Chronicles 28). It was written of this period, *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. (2 Chronicles 28:19)

For all this, Judah would 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 28:22 says, *Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord.*

V 11-14. See how the Lord describes His reaction to these religious rituals: ***I have had enough . . . bring no more futile sacrifices . . . an abomination to Me . . . I cannot endure . . . My soul hates . . . they are a trouble to Me . . . I am weary of bearing them.***

What a sobering thought! We can offer God all kinds of religious rituals and ceremonies, all kinds of religious service, and He may hate it and consider it an abomination! Perhaps, in the midst of all their calamity (described in Isaiah 1:5-9), Judah thought the answer was in religious ceremonies, in their ancient version of “church attendance” and a few dollars in the offering. But if their heart wasn’t changed, and humbled, and surrendered to the Lord, it made no difference. *Without the right heart, God hated their religious ceremony and service!*

“When sinners are under the judgments of God they will more easily be brought to fly to their devotions than to forsake their sins and reform their lives.” (Matthew Henry)

V 18. ***“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord:*** The Lord God invites His people to come reason with Him. What He offers us isn’t just offered because He is “bigger” than us and has the right to dictate whatever terms please Him. God’s direction for us is reasonable. It is smart. It is the best way to live.

What madness it is to reject and resist a God of infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite grace, and infinite power! True reason will drive any honest man to the most humble adoration and submission towards God.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool: The Lord offers a repentant, humbled Judah true and complete cleansing from sin. Their condition of sin can be transformed from deeply stained to completely white.

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 we can be accounted white as snow and as white as wool.

What tremendous hope there is in God’s forgiveness! We really can be clean from the stain of sin. Our good works can’t clean the stain. Our best intentions or 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, and terror of sin, and the pain of sin can all be taken away in Jesus.

“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 to be less than it really is. No; whatever you say it is, it is all that, and probably far more. Your deepest sense of your sinfulness does not come up to the truth concerning your real condition; certainly, you do not exaggerate in the least. Your sins are scarlet, and crimson; it seems as though you have put on the imperial robe of sin, and made yourself a monarch of the realm of evil.’ That is how a man’s guilt appears before the searching eye of God.” (Spurgeon)

When we consider the greatness of God’s cleansing and pardon, it is all the more reason for us to ***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!

V 19-20. ***If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword:*** Here God offers Judah a choice. They can find hope in the midst of their chastisement, relief from empty religious ritual, and cleansing from their sin. But they must surrender their heart before God, and not refuse and rebel. Instead, they must be willing and obedient.

No one perfectly matches either phrase, but which phrase better describes your life? Is it willing and obedient or refuse and rebel? There is a consequence for either course: eat of the good of the land, or be devoured by the sword. No wonder the Lord said “Come now, let us reason together!”