

ISAIAH 1

Israel's Rebellion Against Yahweh

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 Yahweh has spoken:

Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken Yahweh. They have despised the Holy One of Israel. They are utterly estranged. 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises, sores, and raw wounds. They are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. 7 Your country lies desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. In your very presence foreigners devour your land. It is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. 9 If Yahweh of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. 10 Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says Yahweh. I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, of lambs, or of goats. 12 When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? 13 Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes. Cease to do evil. 17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.

18 Come now, let us reason together, says Yahweh. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.¹ 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. 20 But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

¹ This promise is conditioned by vv. 19-20.

21 How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. 22 Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. 23 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.

24 Therefore Yahweh declares, Yahweh of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:

Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. 25 I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. 26 And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. 28 But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake Yahweh shall be consumed. 29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired, and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. 30 For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers and like a garden without water. 31 And the strong shall become tinder and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.

Biblical Worldview

1. Yahweh hates false, hypocritical, religious rituals (Is 1:13-15).

- a. **Is1:13-15** 13 Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.
- b. Injustice is as evil as idolatry or offering a defective sacrifice.
 - (1) **Dt 27:15** 15 Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to Yahweh, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.
 - (2) **Dt 17:1** 1 You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God.
- c. God hates religious ritual accompanied by unethical behavior.
 - (1) **Pr 21:27** 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination. How much more when he brings it with evil intent.
 - (2) Cf. the death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 6.
- d. God doesn't want our worship if we are practicing injustice to our fellow man.
 - (1) "This vehement, unconditional repudiation of the whole of Israel's established worship has several premises: first, that in all its forms, worship is, like prayer, a social transaction between persons, with no magical virtue or intrinsic efficacy. It rather is a gesture of submission and like all gestures a formality whose meaning depends ultimately on the total moral evaluation the recipient makes of the one who gestures; for the recipient to esteem the gesturer there must be some moral identification between them. ...For worship to find favor in God's eyes, the worshiper must identify himself with ('know' in the biblical idiom; e.g., Jer. 22:15f) God in the one way possible for man—by imitating his moral conduct (compare Hos. 4:1f. and Jer. 9:23). Gestures of submission made by villains are an abomination to God."²

2. Isaiah indicts Israel on two things in particular: idolatry and injustice.

- a. Idolatry (Is 1:29).
- b. Injustice (Is 1:17, 23).
- c. God demands exclusive worship of himself and the pursuit of justice among our fellow men. In other words, he wants from us vertical and horizontal love.
- d. As a matter of human nature, idolatry always leads to injustice.

3. Love for God and love for man go together. They are the two great commandments.

- a. **Mt 22:36-40** 36 Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 And [Jesus] said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39

² Moshe Greenberg.

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.

- b. **Mk 12:28-34** 28 One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that [Jesus] answered them well, asked him, Which commandment is the most important of all? 29 Jesus answered, The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. 31 The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. 32 And the scribe said to him, You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God.
- c. The royal law of Scripture is, "Love your neighbor as yourself."
 - (1) **Jas 2:8** 8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well.
 - (2) Obedience to the royal law of love takes priority over religious rituals.
- d. Pure and undefiled religion is visit orphans and widows in their affliction.
 - (1) **Jas 1:27** 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- e. If we close our heart against our brother or sister in need, God's love does not abide in us.
 - (1) **1 Jn 3:17** 17 If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?
- f. One cannot love God and at the same time hate his neighbor.

Notes