

Isaiah 1

Wrath-Provoking Sin as the Backdrop for Glorious Grace

Wednesday, May 24, 2023 • Read Isaiah 1

Questions from the Scripture text: Whose vision is this book (v1)? Whose son is he? Concerning whom did he see it? During the reigns of what four kings? Whom does he call to witness in v2a? Who has spoken (v2b)? How does He put his case in v2c–d? To what does He unfavorably compare Judah in v3? What four things does he all them in v4a–d? What two things have they done to Whom (v4e–g)? By doing what (v4h)? What are they bringing upon themselves (v5a)? How are they proceeding (v5b)? How bad has it gotten (v5c–6)? Whom does the prophet now address in v7? How severe has been their chastening (v7–8)? What mercy has the Lord shown them (v9a–b)? What did this keep from happening (v9c–d)? What does he call them in v10? What does he tell them to do? Who is addressing them now in v11? What is He rejecting in v11? What does He call their public worship in v12? What does He say about what parts of their religion in v13–14? How will He respond to their worship (v15)? What does He tell them to do in v16a? By doing what, generally (v16b–c)? What specific things must they do (v17)? What is the Lord offering, in connection with this repentance (v18)? What two outcomes are offered to them (v19–20)? How do Jerusalem's past and present compare to one another (v21–23)? Therefore, what will the Lord do for Himself and His people (v24–26)? How does He summarize what He is doing in v27? For whom, specifically, is He doing it? How is He doing it (v28)? By doing what to them (v29–31)?

What is the Lord going to do for Israel and why? Isaiah 1 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these thirty-one verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us **the Lord is going to forgive and purify Israel because she has made herself guilty and filthy by sin.**

The time period of Isaiah's ministry is established in v1—at least the 32 years of Jotham and Ahaz, but also stretching backward into the reign of Azariah/Uzziah and forward into the reign of Hezekiah at very least to the fifteenth year of his reign (when ch38 occurs). So, Isaiah prophesied for around fifty years during which Assyria's power was reaching its height.

But one of the features of the book of Isaiah is its view of history as supremely, sovereignly ruled by God. Assyria's rise is primarily due to Israel's provoking of God. God will answer these provocations by a fiery chastening that burns the filth off of Israel. But, in announcing this, He also prophesies the ultimate solution to sin: atonement by a Redeemer Who Himself is perfectly righteous, Who Himself will be the great and forever King.

As a whole, chapters 1–5 set the context for this. In this opening chapter, the Holy Spirit is presenting us with how God's people have provoked Him.

As a nation, v2–9. Heaven and earth (v2a) must heed their Creator, but there is a nation whom He has taken to Himself as His special people. This makes their rebellion unnatural (v2c–d), more ignorant than the beasts (v3). He has stooped down to nourish and rear children (v2c), but His nation and children have instead become a nation and offspring of wickedness (v4a–d). So, they have provoked the Holy One Who chose them (v4e–h) to punish them severely (v5–8). The only thing that has kept them from being utterly destroyed is the pleasure of Yahweh to spare a very small remnant (v9).

As a church, v10–20. This section begins not by addressing heaven and earth (v2) but by addressing Israel themselves (v10). Devastatingly, He calls them according to their character, "Sodom... Gomorrah." If those cities had shown up for worship, Israel would have found it revolting, abominable. Little did they understand that this is exactly what their worship was unto the living God. Their worship was unwanted (v11c), unwelcome (v11e), offensive (v12c), useless (v13a), abominable (v13b), unendurable (v13d), hateful (v14b), troubling (v14c), wearying (v14d), rejected (v15b), and refused (v15d). This, despite all of the things that they were doing being Scripture commands. We cannot assume that God likes our worship simply because we do. If we worship in the way that we wish, God calls this hating Him (cf. Ex 20:4–5). But if we worship as those who have been rejecting His commandments in the rest of life, He still hates our worship!

God commands repentance in the life (v16–17, 19–20) if we hope for our worship to be acceptable. And He offers to the repentant that He will receive them as if perfectly holy and pleasing and acceptable (v18).

Much later in this book, we will learn how that can be (e.g. ch53). But for now, we see that even with such a filthy church whose worship is so hateful to Him, the Lord invites them to come and reason with Him. The Lord invites them to engage with Him for His verdict and promises a favorable outcome for those who do.

As a culture, v21–31. In vv2–9, the Lord had condemned how their conduct contradicted their identity as belonging to Him. Now, in vv21–23 He condemns how their conduct contradicts the character that their culture was to have. Faithfulness, justice, righteousness, silver, wine, and princes... what a glorious, godly culture this was to be! But alas, prostitution, murder, dross, wateriness, rebellion, greed, and callousness describes them now.

Are these the people of God? They are saturated with His enemies, and He is going to rid Himself of them (v24) by putting the people through whatever is necessary to purify them (v25) and bring them back to what they were supposed to be (v26).

Those who will return to Him will continue under the name Zion and be redeemed with justice (v27). But all others will be destroyed and consumed (v28) together with the fading, worldly delights they chose over God (v29–30). They and their work will burn (v31).

When we read God's unanswerable assessment of His people, we are not at all surprised that the exile is coming. But God's ultimate plan (v18, 27) is a surprise indeed. The greatness of their sin is the backdrop for the greater-ness of His grace, by which the glory of His Servant-Christ will be supremely displayed.

And, if we understand ourselves rightly from the rest of Scripture, we will see that what was true of Israel as a nation, church, and culture is also true of our own wretched hearts, apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us learn to see ourselves and our sin more truly, so that we may see His grace and glory all the more clearly!

What privileges has the Lord given you? What ought you to have been to Him? What have you desired and lived for instead? What thoughts, words, and actions of yours have been most inconsistent with your privileges and callings? How can it be that God would consider you white and clean anyway? How can it be that you would be part of His glorious people in the end?

Sample prayer: Lord, how very much we identify with Isaiah's description of Judah! You took us to be Your own children, but we often live as if You don't even exist. We have forsaken You and provoked You to anger. In ourselves, there is nothing good, but only corruption.

If You Yourself did not spare and redeem, we would be utterly destroyed. Apart from Christ, our best worship is offensive to You, and You would be right to reject our prayers.

So, we have come to reason with You, to engage with You at Your own urging. Cleanse our scarlet sins, and make us white as snow. Redeem us in Your justice. Be unto us both just and Justifier, through faith in Jesus Christ, which we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP80 "Hear, O Hear Us" or TPH80B "Great Shepherd Who Leadest Thy People"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah chapter 1. These are the words of god. The vision of isaiah, the son of a moss which he saw concerning Judah and jerusalem. In the days of desire jatham ahaz and has a kayaking of judah. Hero heavens and give hero earth. For y'all, he has spoken I have nourished and brought up children.

They've rebelled against me. The aux knows its owner and the donkey it's master's crib, but israel. Does not know my people do not consider. The last inflammation. The people laden with iniquity of brood of evildoers. Children, who are corrupters? The forsaken Yahweh they have provided to anger. The holy one of Israel.

They've turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head said, can the whole heart faints? From the soul of the foot, even to the head, there is no sadness in it. But wounds and bruises and petrifying source. They have not been closed or bound up pursued with ointment.

Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Strangers, devour your land in your presence. And it is desolate is overthrown by strangers. So, the daughter of Zion has left as a booth and a vineyard As a hot in the garden of cucumbers. As a besieged city. Unless you always opposed had left to us.

A very small remnant. We would have become like this autumn. We would have become like Gomorrah. Hear the word of yahai. You rulers of sodom. Give ear to the law of our god, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? It says y'all play.

I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and The fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or lambs, or goats. When you come to appear before me, it was required. This from your hand to trample. My courts. Bring no more feudal sacrifices. Incense is an abomination to me.

The new moons, the sabots the calling of assemblies. Cannot endure iniquity in the sacred meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts to my soul hates. There are trouble to me. I'm weary bearing them. When you spread out your hands, i will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, i will not hear.

Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of you're doings from before my eyes. Cease to do, evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice rebuke, the oppressor. Defend the fatherless plead for the widow. Come now. And let us reason together. It says go away.

Though, your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as what it snow. Though, they are red light. Crimson they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient to, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you're fuse and repel, You shall be devoured by the sword.

For the mouth of your way, has spoken. How the faithful city has become a harlot. It was full of right. Justice righteousness, lodged in it. But now murderers, Your silver has become draws. You're more your wine mixed with water. Your princes or rebellious. Companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes and follows afterwards.

They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them. Therefore the lord says yahweh. Opposed the mighty one of Israel. I will defend, 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 draws. And take away all your alloy. I will restore your judges as at first, And your counselors, as at the beginning, After work, you shall be called the city of righteousness. The faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with justice. Her penitence was righteousness. The destruction of transgressors, and of sinners shall be together.

And those who forsake Yahweh. Shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the terrible trees, which you have desired. And you shall be embarrassed because the gardens which you have chosen. For you shall be as a terribenth whose leaf fades. And as a garden, that has no water.

The strong shall be as tender. And the work of it as a spark. Both will burn together. And no one shall punch them. So, for the reading of god's inspired and inherent worked,

There's one establishes the Time period of isaiah's ministry.

It says it was in the days of desire and drop them and they have and Hezekiah kings of Judah. So that when you read in chapter 6, about in the year that is ayah, or asariah as we know him, Difference in kings died. Isaiah was already. Profit at that point.

Drop him, an A has rained for 32 years. And, Chapter 38 and following occur in the 15th year. Of Hezekiah's reign. So is there prophesied for around 50 years? It's a long. It's extended ministry. And it's a ministry.

In which? The northern kingdom. Was destroyed by during which the northern kingdom was destroyed by. Assyria. An exiled. And the sins of the southern kingdom weren't any better. And so, there's There's grievous warning.

One of the features of this book is that it views history? What had happened in the north? What is going to come and happen to them? At the hands of Babylon. It views history. As supremely solemnly, ruled. By god. That Assyria had arisen because Israel had caught. And that god is.

As we read in this. Passage going to bring a fiery chase and That burns, the draws. The filth. The stuff that was mixed in with the pure valuable metal, it's going to burn it off of them. By punishment. But as the book promises this, it also promises A servant to his perfect.

A servant to takes away. Their guilt and who obeys? In their place, a redeemer. Who is perfectly righteous? And then who ends up being The forever king. And so, there's a Section from about,

37 comparison to. Hezekiah and tourism of Judah. 37 to

Can't remember now where the division is, but from 37 to 66 is Follows. Uh, is divided into two parts, the first part. Of that section. Is all about. Christ, as the suffering servant. The righteous one and his righteous, like, they Couldn't be. But then, That transitions. From christ is the suffering servant to christ as the

victorious forever king.

And not only over Israel. But overall of the nations. Now, the first part of the book is kind of this Prologue. In chapters one through five. Where God is setting the context? For this view of history, and Christ. As the climax of history. That the book as a whole gives us.

So, in chapters, one through five, the Holy Spirit is present.

When chapters one through five, the Holy Spirit is presenting a case. For just how terribly. Israel had provoked, the Lord. And of course, then chapter 1 begins that. The chapter that we've just read. Describes Israel as a sinful nation. As the wicked church and as a wicked city.

He calls. Having an earth. To witness against. The nation that he had taken to himself as a special people. You see in verses? Verse 2, and then you see how? In versus two, and three specifically. How unnatural the rebellion against the Lord is. Like children rebelling against a father, who nourishes them or an ox or a donkey.

Rejecting its master, who takes care of them. You're saying. Israel are stupider than beasts. Because they are provoking the Lord.

They are. Verse 4, a sinful nation. They're full of full of sin. Offspring of evildoers, they're corrupters. There forsaken. Forsaking the Lord. So he's in a punish them. Very severely versus five three, eight. Emphasize how severe? Is the punishment. That is going to come upon them. But then, um, verse 9 at the end of this section justice.

Verse 18, through 20 at the end of the next section. There's the grace of the Lord that will keep them from being destroyed. That we'll use this punishment. Ultimately to do. Because people like a whole his people considered corporately good. And so verse 9, unless Yahweh. Of hosts had left left to us a very small remnant.

We would have become like Sodom we would have been made like a moron, so they well, the idea is they deserve to be obliterated as automatic memorial did. Uh, but the Lord. In his grace. Has spared a small remnant. So, the nation has provoked him. And verses 2 through 9, and the only hope.

Is that the Lord would be gracious to them completely at opposite, what they deserve? That deserve to end up. Uh, like Sodom and Gomorrah. Well, then they're also wicked as a church versus 10 to 20. There is all sorts of worship that people love, and God hates. It's a, it's an insanity that we would think that goddess pleased with worship, just because we think it's virtual.

And, He describes. They're appearing before him. As a trampling of his courts, he's referring to the idea earlier in the chapter that they don't love him. They don't acknowledge him. Uh, there are worse than beasts. And so, when they come, um, they're not. You know, they they're doing. Uh, some of according to the traditions that they have from the pattern that's given in God's words.

But everything they offer them, he hates. He, he can't endure. It's worse. That they came and offered the worship than if they hadn't. Offered at all. He hides. His eyes from them, refuses to hear. Their prayers. Because they're wicked. They need to come as those who are atoned for.

And atonement doesn't happen by the blood of holes and goats. The tournament happens through union with Christ. A tournament happens through the righteousness and sacrifice of Jesus. And that. Is applied to us. Uh, not mechanically or magically by doing. Particular actions. Applied to us by the living act of vital work.

Of God, the Holy Spirit and so it always comes with repentance. There's no such thing as someone that the Holy Spirit brings to faith. But he doesn't bring to repentance. And so you see in verse 16, where he starts saying wash yourselves, make yourself clean put away your evil doing, Before my eyes.

Uh learn to do good seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless bleed for the widow. All of these are. Our actions of repentance. Uh, and everywhere in the Bible, where we see real repentance, Or where we see real faith and forgiveness. Uh, we see. Uh, repentance. Now, he offers to the repentant.

That he will receive them as perfectly holy and pleasing and acceptable. Not just better. The perfectly. Come. Now, let us reason together. It says y'all made though your sins are like scarlet. They are looks. What they are and what they will be, are two different things. They will be, what it's not?

Well, are they, they're like, crimson. Well, what they will be like wool. And we find out later, in the book. The prophecy of. Uh, Christ receiving the, the chastisement. That sinners deserve. How this can be?

So, there's um, if there's worship. Without repentance from all sin. If there's worship. Without engaging. Uh, God himself. And the Lord Jesus Christ, it's worship that God hates. Even if it was so-called regulative principal worship, which is nonsense, Because, yes, there are particular actions that God has commanded. Uh, corporate actions of corporate worship.

There's nothing that God has commanded more. Than that. We repent of our sin. And believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is the only worship. That God accepts is when we come to him. And repentance and faith. But when we do come to him and repentance and faith, He is perfectly pleased. With the worshipers, verse 18 tells us, And then as, as a city, And here, he so, describing, especially The, the culture of the city, In verse two through nine, he had.

Condemned. How their conduct can? Contradicted, their identity. As belonging to him. But it wasn't just their identity. It was against his law and The character that they had had. When they begin. At first. Uh, trying to obey that law. So he says how the faithful city. Has become. A harlot, an adulterous.

Unfaithful. And so, Uh, the city he describes. What it had been. Faithful. Uh, trust righteous. Marked by silver and wine. Princess. But now, Instead of these things. There's prostitution and murder. Instead of silver, there's draws instead of wine. There's water.

And the people are marked by rebellion and greed. And hard-heartedness Towards. Even those who are most needy. As you see at the end. Of verse 23 with the fatherless. And the weather. These were the people of God that were supposed to be. Examples of the character of God. Now.

They are. Uh, exactly opposite. The character of God, And that's why he has.

That's why he is chasing them. He looks at the people who are supposed to be his friends, it's very young people. And he sees the city as being full. Of his

adversaries and enemies very shocking language in verse 24. Y'all have host the mighty one of israel says. I will rid myself of my adversaries and take vengeance on my enemies.

And who are these adversaries and enemies in verse 24 verse 25. I will turn my hand. Against you. And then, he uses the The same image of verse 22 with the silver and gross. To say that he's going to get rid. Of all the draws. But he's going to get rid of.

Everything that is. Uh, wrong with his people. Uh, by putting them through whatever is necessary. Uh, to cleanse them. To purify them. And then the work is going to be faithful verse 26. I will restore your judges at the first and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward, you shall be called the city of righteousness.

The faithful city. Those who return to him. Will continue under the name. Zion verse 27. That be redeemed, justice. All others are going to be destroyed and consumed. Verse 28. And the fading and worldly delights that they had chosen over god, verse 29 and 30. Are also. Going to be destroyed and the The work that they.

That they lived for other than serving and obeying the lord. It too. Will be burnt up. So, we have As a nation as a church. And then as a city in the culture, In the third section. We have a very Grievous. I'm sobering. Very damning quite literally. Assessment. Of the people of god.

And it's unanswerable. So that when the exile is coming, Not just the fact that Assyria has arisen, but that Babylon is going to come. And, Uh, the things that we've just finished reading about at the end of second kings, are going to happen. We're not surprised that the lord does this.

Because, This is what they deserve. However. If you look at verse 9, And verse 18 and verse 27. With the sparing of the remnant, and the cleansing of their sin. And the redeeming of a zion. This is the surprise. His destroying them is not a surprise, it's his mercy.

It's a salvation. The greatness of their sin. Is the backdrop for the greatness of his grace? And that's really the, the story of the entire book of isaiah, and to a great extent. The story. Of the entire bible. But this is this, it is. This greatness of his grace that is hinted at in verse 9.

And verse 18 and verse 27. That has added center the glory. Of the servant king. That is coming later and in the second half of the book, And what's the glory of christ? Of course he is the servant king. Will be supremely, displayed. Now, if we understand ourselves rightly from scripture before god, we know That apart from christ.

What was true here of Israel? As a nation and a church and a culture. Is true personally individually. Of every one of ourselves. Apart from the grace of the lord jesus christ. And so when god confronts his people, the way he does and isaiah chapter 1, This is just written so that we can say, wow, look at how bad israel was.

It is written for that. So that we can be amazed when we say, look at what god did. Anyway. But it is written, especially so that we may say, wow, My sin 2. Looks like this. Before the eyes of god. And he gave Christ for me. Who was such a sinner.

And he is making me. Clean. Forgiven. Righteous reigning forever. Who had been such a sinner. And deserved such destruction. A trust and a pleasure of his grace. And the power of his salvation in jesus. Be saves me. He has save. He is saving me. He will finish saving me.

Also that we will see the glory of the servant king. The glory. Of the lord jesus christ. This is, this is either. This is the story of our life. The glory of jesus christ. The servant king. Saving us despite ourselves or The story of our life will be. Versus 28 through 31.

We being destroyed the stuff we loved being destroyed all that was our purpose in in life. And our work being destroyed. So let us ask the holy spirit. To remind us again. Turn us. To christ to love his glory. And to desire. That is great that god's grace. In his gorgeous, christ would be the story of our life.

Our father in heaven. We pray that your holy spirit would help us. As we shift gears to the book of isaiah, it's a little bit different but it's the same gospel. And we've just heard. We've just heard quite the skating. The condemnation of israel. In their sin and realize.

That apart from christ, you would say the same thing about us. So we pray that you're Spirit would be reminding us of this. This great option that we have. Between either. And being those whose story is that christ is glorified. As our savior, despite ourselves. Or those. Who as his enemies and under his sin.

Under our sin, our destroyed Like sodom and Gamora. And like those. Who were the draws of your people. Him, you Whom you perched by the fire of your wrath. When so lord give us to turn from our sin. To trust in the lord jesus. To be cleansed whitest now.

To be that remnant to a spare. Just because You are merciful and pleased. To say it pleased you to save some. Have mercy, have that. Mercy on us. We pray in jesus name. Amen.