

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 5
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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Five

GOD'S SOLUTION TO ISRAEL'S SIN

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Isaiah 1:18–31

¹⁸Come 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. ¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: ²⁰but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

²¹How is the faithful city become a harlot! she that was full of justice! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. ²²Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. ²³Thy 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.

²⁴Therefore 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; ²⁵and I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin; ²⁶and 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. ²⁷Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness. ²⁸But the destruction of transgressors and sinners shall be together, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed. ²⁹For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. ³⁰For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. ³¹And the strong shall be as tow, and his work as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them (ASV, 1901).

REASONING WITH GOD

Isaiah 1:18

¹⁸Come 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 (ASV, 1901).

God begins this section of Scripture with a polite request to His people to enter into a mutual understanding of what He requires for obedience. He begins the verse with the word come. The imperative “come” asks a meeting of the minds between the parties “to determine what is right” in order to restore the relationship between God and his people. The spirit with which God

desires to enter this discussion assumes and understand that Judah has sinned, to re-evaluate the legitimacy of people's worship, and to reassess whether justice was actually provided for the widow or orphan.

The word translated "reason" is a Hebrew Niphal form verb *neevahchcha*. It is a reflexive verb that has the characteristic of the one doing the action is also receiving the action. One example would be, "I said to myself." So, I am doing the speaking and also receiving the speaking. Here, God says in a very polite manner to His people to "Come, Please, let us reason together." This amounts to a command to appear in a discussion in which it will be shown that Israel is exactly the sinful nation that God has accused her of being, and also that He is the God who is willing to forgive. The reasoning process reveals our God given cogitative ability which He created in us to communicate, understand our world and most importantly to dialogue with Him, through prayer and His Scriptures. This begins the section with a direct request to dialogue with God about their sins and to stop, think about what He requires and repent. He is essentially challenging them to enter into an honest discussion about the wrongs they have committed and to who all sins are really directed, Him.

All of us have a natural defense mechanism. When we are challenged we erect barriers to protect ourselves and preserve our positions. As God approaches His people He very politely says please (Hebrew *na*) let us, you and I, think through the behavior I see in you my chosen people. Please drop the natural defense mechanism and open up to me so we can exchange thoughts about your behaviors objectively. So, then you can see this is not my fault that you are behaving in a sinful manner. God says that their sins are as scarlet they but, can be washed clean to be *as white as snow*.

Repentance bleaches out the scarlet of sins to become clean and white. In Hebrew poetic parallelism the textual idea is repeated in a different manner with *though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*. Namely, the iniquity will depart, and you will again be free from all sin. The use of scarlet and crimson which is a deeper shade of scarlet is used for emphasis embodies the charge against them from verse 15 where he says, "your hands are full of blood."

OBEDIENCE OR REBELLION

Isaiah 1:19–20

¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: ²⁰but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it (ASV, 1901).

God is saying to the Southern Kingdom, "If you consent in your intentions, and are also obedient in your actions" *Ye shall eat the good of the land*; i.e. there shall be no invasion; strangers shall not devour your crops (ver. 7); you shall consume them yourselves. "The good of the land" is a common expression for its produce (Genesis 45:18, 20; Ezra 9:12; Nehemiah 9:36; Jeremiah 2:7). However, *If, ye refuse and rebel*; i.e. "if ye neither consent in will, nor obey in act," *Ye shall be devoured*; that is, you shall be eaten. The Lord also provides the means by which they will be devoured, *with the sword*. Isaiah then provides the emphatic statement of the origin of the

text he has written, *for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*. This is also indicating the certainty that it will be fulfilled. Jehovah, who cannot lie, has spoken; the result will certainly follow.

This had been given to them in the Mosaic law as a promise for a blessing for obedience and a cursing for rebellion.

Leviticus 26:3–21

³If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ⁴then I will give your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. ⁶And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. ⁷And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish my covenant with you. ¹⁰And ye shall eat old store long kept, and ye shall bring forth the old because of the new. ¹¹And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹²And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. ¹³I am Jehovah your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright.

¹⁴But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; ¹⁵and if ye shall reject my statutes, and if your soul abhor mine ordinances, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant; ¹⁶I also will do this unto you: I will appoint terror over you, even consumption and fever, that shall consume the eyes, and make the soul to pine away; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be smitten before your enemies: they that hate you shall rule over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. ¹⁸And if ye will not yet for these things hearken unto me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins. ¹⁹And I will break the pride of your power: and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass; ²⁰and your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

²¹And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. ²²And I will send the beast of the field among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your ways shall become desolate (ASV, 1901).

LAMENTATION OVER JERUSALEM

Isaiah 1:21–23

²¹How is the faithful city become a harlot! she that was full of justice! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. ²²Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. ²³Thy 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.

This section introduces a lamentation or dirge over the tragic situation that has come upon Jerusalem. The passage begins with the word *how*. In Hebrew the word *eykah* is the beginning of a lamentation, that serves as both a complaint and an amazement. In other words, how is it possible that a faithful city could become what she now is, a harlot? Their heart has been completely cut-off from the wickedness of their ways. They were no longer able to discern good from evil. Their hearts were hardened to the point that they were ruled by lust and deceit. Jerusalem was worse than a brazen prostitute. She was an adulterous wife as well as a prostitute because she preferred strangers to her own husband (Jehovah God). Jerusalem was a corrupt spiritual adulterer. She had even resorted to paying bribes (rather than receiving a fee) to get the attention that earlier had been lavishly bestowed on her. Silver represents all that is noble and pure. This silver has now become dross which is the impurities separated out in the refining process. The thought is not that here and there specks appear upon the metal but that the metal itself has turned into dross. It is no longer silver, but just the impurities. Primarily, it references “*Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves*” meaning, the great men or leaders have deteriorated. With cutting, the strength of the wine is poetic parallelism with *kaspek*, “*thy silver.*” The metal that was previously very pure as well as the fine wine of the land, was destroyed, the wine having been weakened by mixing it with water. The silver had just become its impurity, the dross. The rebellious rulers in the city were leading the people into ruin through their theft, bribery, and injustice to the helpless. The fatherless and widows could not even get hearings because they had no money for bribing the rulers. This situation was especially abhorrent to God because these were His chosen people who were bound to Him and also to each other. But now they had no concern for each other’s property and needs. They preyed upon the weak and helpless.

Such a reversal showed her debased preference to idolatry and foreign alliances. As she left God and His protective laws, He then withheld His blessings that He had so freely given to them in earlier days (Ezekiel 16:26-29).

JERUSALEM’S SPIRITUAL GRANDEUR RESTORED

Isaiah 1:24:27

²⁴Therefore 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; ²⁵and I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin; ²⁶and 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. ²⁷Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness (ASV, 1901).

God speaking directly identifies Himself and first the *Lord, Jehovah of hosts*. This is a reference to the Divine Council which He administers in Heaven (Psalm 82:1). This is also called the Army of God and Congregation of the Mighty. The divine council is the army of God, but also witnesses God's decrees and acts. God often commands this unidentified celestial group in a context that makes it obvious he is not speaking to humans "*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God*" (Isaiah 40:1–2). These commands are not directed at Jerusalem or Israel, for they are the objects of the commands, instead they are directed at the divine council. He then further identifies Himself as if to make no mistake to the audience as to whom is speaking. He calls Himself the Mighty One of Israel. This is also the name which Jacob gave to the alter which he erected on the piece of land where he pitched his tent before Shechem, and which he afterwards purchased from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 33:20). The Lord now says that He offers a threat and an encouragement. The perversions of Jerusalem will be cured and it will become a pure and righteous city that it once was. Interestingly, he says that the corrupt leaders will vanish to be replaced by *thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning*. The honest and true leaders will be installed to replace the evil.

When God says *And I will turn my hand*—it means by a movement of the hand, either for the purpose of inflicting punishment (as in Amos 1:8; Jeremiah 6:9; Ezekiel 38:12; Psalm 81:15) or of bringing blessing (Zechariah 13:7). It is to be used here that he will perform a work of purifying judgment and so restore the nation Israel. The judgment to come, then, is not for the purpose of complete destruction, but of purification. God will never destroy His people.

Romans 11:25–32

²⁵For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; ²⁶and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ²⁷And this is my covenant unto them, When I shall take away their sins. ²⁸As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. ²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of. ³⁰For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, ³¹even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy. ³²For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon (ASV, 1901).

REMOVAL OF THE DISOBEDIENT

Isaiah 1:28–31

²⁸But the destruction of transgressors and sinners shall be together, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed. ²⁹For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. ³⁰For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

³¹And the strong shall be as tow, and his work as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them (ASV, 1901).

God decrees the outcome of the *transgressors and sinners* as they that forsake the Lord (Isaiah 1: 2, 4). These are not two very distinct classes—rather different names for the ungodly. All of them, by whatever name they were called, would perish “together.” Within those who oppose God are the sinners who commit lesser sins and the transgressors also known as rebels who engage in the stronger sin of idolatry. A sinner can be defined a one whom the sin producing temptation which then gets the better of him. Whereas the rebel is one who wantonly rebels purposefully against God’s commandments. The final description is *they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed*. This is a summary of the sinners and rebels all of whom forsake the Word of God for their satanic desires of disobedience. Sinners can more easily repent and receive forgiveness. Rebels may or may not repent even with divine correction (Revelation 16:11).

In revealing the final destruction of idolaters God now references their present worship and confidence in idols, which, he tells them shall be put to shame and disappointed. *For they shall be ashamed of the oaks or terebinths which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens which ye have chosen* as places of idolatrous worship. These terms are constantly used thorough out the Old testament to express the frustration of religious idolatry, and as groves and gardens are continually spoken of as chosen scenes of idol-worship (Isaiah 65:3; 66:17; Ezekiel 6:13; Hosea 4:13). It is quite obvious that both this verse and verse 28 are referencing idolatry.

But to those who do not overcome shall be as a mighty *oak without a healthy leaf* or a garden *without water*. Meaning in the case of the ungodly, whose “*are like the chaff which the wind driveth away*” But the strong and obedient will be as the spark what ignites the fuel. The obedient will be as the godly. Both types are described in the first Psalm.

Psalm 1:1–3

¹Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: ²But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. ³And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. ⁵Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish (ASV, 1901).

And none shall quench. The phrase emphasizes the totality of the destruction of God and provides a terrifying climax to the entire chapter. The causes for which the judgment is to come are spiritual and moral in nature, namely, the sins of the nation, it follows that the punishment will be a just punishment for those sins. Even here there is a message of hope. It is always a purpose of God to save a remnant.

Next message: ASPECTS OF THE COMING MESSIANIC KINGDOM

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