

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 2

December 9, 2018



Isaiah the Prophet in Kizhi monastery in Russia 18th century

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Two

ISRAEL DOES NOT KNOW HER LORD

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Isaiah 1:2–9

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. ³The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. ⁴Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward. ⁵Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. ⁶From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. ⁷Your 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. ⁸And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. ⁹Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah (ASV, 1901).

THE LORD'S CHILDREN HAVE REBELLED

Isaiah 1:2–9

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me (ASV, 1901).

To listen to Isaiah the prophet is to listen to God, for the words, which come forth from him, have been received super-naturally and originate outside of the time and space domain. The Lord chose him and impressed upon him these matters to convey to the world. Now our Lord begins His great polemic toward His chosen people, the Nation Israel. He calls on the heavens saying to them to hear what He has to say. He then calls on the earth to give ear or “listen” to what He has to say. The Hebrew word for hear is *shema* which is a straightforward word simply meaning hear. But the Hebrew word for listen is a Hiphil verb form. This particular form expresses an imperative meaning that God is saying with great emphasis to pay attention or be obedient. It is a command. The word is *ha-azneen*, which literally translated is “And In Your Ears.” God is

saying to the Heavens to listen but to the earth He says get this message in to your ears or deep with you. The strength of His orders are made clear to Israel.

His appeal to the heavens and the earth is not merely hyperbole. It would be if God had not created the whole Heaven and as well as that which is within it including the earth and its contents. This is recognition of the whole order of the Universe and the totality of life as well.

What God's people are doing is an offense against nature and the order he has ordained. Sin, pride, and oppression are contrary to creation as God envisioned it. The heavenly bodies all follow what God has ordained them to do. They move in their various circuits and ellipticals as He has commanded. The stars produce the exact light as He created and they all are suspended in the exact place wherein He has placed them. They do not move outside of the space and path He has provided. There is order to this Universe. His request to the Heavens is to recognize what is happening on earth, that is, the Children of Israel's sins. Within this Universe there is also moral order in addition to the physical order. This is what He is seeing His children, Israel breaking and therefore His much stronger admonition to the earth to LISTEN in your ears!

Moral order of mankind is subject to God's absolute standards of conduct that do not change with circumstances, location or time. These standards are universal to all humanity despite culture or era, and they maintain their relevance whether or not an individual or a culture values them. God has placed in our hearts a standard of right and wrong that, if followed, would result in our being blessed (Romans 2:14–15). But our fallen nature and leading toward sinful behavior cloud our conscience. Therefore, the Bible admonishes us to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). Psalm 119:59 says, *"I considered my ways and turned my feet to Your testimonies."* Consideration of human nature shows us our inability and our need for God: *"If Your law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction"* (Psalm 119:92).

God has set in place certain standards, and it is sinful to break those standards. Psalm 24:1 testifies to God's authority: *"The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains; the world, and those who dwell in it."* He set the absolutes of our morality expressed throughout His Word: *"You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today"* (Deuteronomy 27:10). The divine command of moral absolutism is what the Lord teaches us, and the Bible records. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule, which characterizes the universal morality we all realize which is to treat others as we want to be treated (Luke 6:31). Jesus also succinctly sums up the relationship to God and others.

Mark 12:30–31

³⁰ *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*³¹ *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these (KJV).*

THE BEASTS KNOW THEIR MASTER

Isaiah 1:3–4

³The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. ⁴Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward (ASV, 1901).

As the Lord continues to condemn Israel for her sins He brings an example to them of His creatures obeying Him through the instinct He has placed within them. But, His children Israel are a sinful nation. They are *a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly!* He said the same thing to them through His prophet Hosea.

Hosea 11:1–4

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. ²The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. ³Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. ⁴I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them (ASV, 1901).

At the beginning the Lord's relationship with Israel was like a father to a son. The Lord displayed His love toward the nation by summoning her from Egypt. However, when God later called them to obedience through His prophets and the Mosaic Law, they rejected Him and turned instead to false gods (the Baalim). The more He called them through the prophets the more they rebelled against Him. Like a father patiently teaching a young child to walk, the Lord had established and sustained Israel. He also restored (healed) the nation's strength after times of judgment. She subsequently failed to acknowledge His intervention.

Israel is compared to a work animal as in the Isaiah passage. God adds to His depiction of the unnatural character of sin by referencing animals. Neither the ox nor the ass is very intelligent. However, even these animals knew from whence they came and who cared for them. Israel could surely do better than them. But no, Israel does not know that much. The Lord is likening Himself to a master who gently in kindness and love leads his animal and releases its yoke so that it might eat with greater ease the food he kindly provides. The Lord treated Israel with compassion and love and they rejected Him as if they did not know Him. In fact they did not just sin and disobey, they regressed and distanced themselves in their relationship to Him as He said *they are estranged and gone backward*. Submission to God's commands will bring a right understanding (Proverbs 1:7), and refusal to submit can only result in foolishness (Romans 1:18–32).

THEIR WHOLE BODY IS SICK

Isaiah 1:5–6

⁵*Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. ⁶From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil (ASV, 1901).*

This passage expresses the sense that suffering *must* follow sin. Then, if they continue to revolt, they must still be smitten for it. So then why, will they continue to do so? Do they not realize that it is their moral disobedience that is causing their suffering? God said the same thing though the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 18:31–32

³¹*Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live (ASV, 1901).*

Again there is a moral order to this universe and God is saying get on My program and end the suffering you are causing yourselves to experience. I will not allow sin to go unpunished. Judgment for sin is my character. So stop your disobedience and experience my comfort. When God's people turn their backs on God certain consequences necessarily follow. Isaiah recounted what was happening in order to help them understand that their difficult times had come because of their disobedience. When the Lord's judgment falls upon His people is a matter of their choice. God has not decided, in some arbitrary way, to punish Israel. The political and social catastrophes they were experiencing were the natural results of living in ways contrary to those God designed for them.

The prophet in his personification of the nation Israel as a body, says that the whole head of the nation is diseased, its whole heart faint, or unable to get up off the ground and stand erect before God. The head and heart represent both the intellectual and moral attributes of the nation. The entire body is completely diseased. It is as if the entire body is one wound, or one festering sore.

The Lord says *they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil*. Here He is referencing closing open wounds, and then treating them with oil, as was the practice in ancient times. The general sentiment of the entire passage is that there has been no medical treatment of the wounds of any kind; they have been left to themselves, to fester and spread corruption over the whole body. In other words there has been no attempt made to cure them. What He says is that the nation Israel does not want to stop their sin against God. This is difficult to understand even though it is apparent their disobedience to the Lord is the cause of them to increasingly suffer.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS HAVE COME TO ISRAEL

Isaiah 1:7–9

⁷Your 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. ⁸And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. ⁹Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah (ASV, 1901).

God writes future prophecies in a completed sense. Which is to say He makes future prophecies expressed in what we call the past tense. That is in His mind they have already occurred. He lives outside of time and space so when He ordains a future event expressed in the past tense it is certain to happen. Here the text is probably referring to the Assyrian (722 B.C.), Babylonian (605; 597 & 586 B.C.), and Roman destructions of Jerusalem (AD 70). At the time of this writing none of these invasions had occurred. Jesus referenced the AD 70 destruction caused by their disobedience.

Matthew 23:37–39

³⁷O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! ³⁸Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. ³⁹For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (ASV, 1901).

God continues saying *and it is desolate*. He speaks of the whole land; and they were carried away captive, and scattered among the nations, where they had been until the late 1800's when they began returning in the Zionist movement. This ultimately led to the re-establishment of their sovereignty in 1948 (Ezekiel 20: 33–37). He says, *your cities are, or shall be, burnt with fire*; as Jerusalem has been, and *your land, strangers devour it in your presence*; before their eyes, and it would not be in their power to prevent it. This was the case with the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans. All were were strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel: *and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers*; who ravage, plunder, and destroy all they meet with, and spare nothing, not intending to settle there.

He continues with *the daughter of Zion* in which the city of Jerusalem is personified. Other instances of this type of personification are Isaiah 47:1, 5, where Babylon is called the “daughter of the Chaldeans;” and Lamentations 1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, where Jeremiah uses this repeatedly to reference Jerusalem. Usually it designates the people living outside the city (Lamentations 2:13; 4:22; Micah 4:8, 10, 13; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 2:10; 9:9).

Vineyards needed to be watched for a few weeks as the fruit began to ripen; and the watchers, or keepers, built themselves, “booths” for their protection (Job 27:18). These were frail, temporary dwellings like tents. The imagery being conveyed is temporary dwellings, which are structurally

very unsound and therefore helpless. Such was now the condition of Jerusalem in its sin awaiting God's judgment, which was certain, and unwavering. Similarly, the text *as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers* is referencing another type of temporary lodging set up in a cucumber patch.

In ancient Israel cucumber gardens required manual vigilance throughout the longer growing season, which extended from spring to fall. Because of the longer growing period the watcher would need a somewhat more solid structure than a tent. So, such gardens had "lodges" in them, i.e. more permanent huts or sheds. They were usually built on an elevation of ground, with room for only one person, who all alone watched the ripening crop. "So did Jerusalem stand in the midst of desolation reaching far and wide—a sign, however, that the land was not entirely without any people"¹ This statement from The New Unger's Bible dictionary is paralleling verse 1:9 *Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

This just simply references their description, which was one of extreme depravity as was the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The clear implication is that God could have made his people like Sodom and Gomorrah—extinct. But he has chosen not to do that. The Lord always leaves a remnant. He will never destroy Israel.

Leviticus 26:43–45

⁴³The land also shall be left by them, and shall enjoy its sabbaths, while it lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they rejected mine ordinances, and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am Jehovah their God; ⁴⁵but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

Jeremiah 31:35–37

³⁵Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: ³⁶If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. ³⁷Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

Next message: THEIR ROTE PRACTICES ARE MEANINGLESS TO GOD

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¹ Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. (1988). In [The new Unger's Bible dictionary](#) (Rev. and updated ed.). Chicago: Moody Press.