

The Prophecy of Isaiah  
**Being Made Upright**

Isaiah ministered both in times of calamity and in times of prosperity. Under the reign of Uzziah, Judah prospered economically, politically, and militarily. However, this state of prosperity ended in spiritual malaise, bringing on greed, injustice, insensitivity, and dead formalism in worship.

Through His prophet Isaiah, God denounces the evil and unjust practices of the people. In order for the prophet to be effective he had to live uprightly himself. Although Isaiah had access to the court of the king he never sought to take personal advantage of his privilege.

On the contrary, Isaiah dared to reprove kings, rebuke nobles, and chide the people for their rebellion. This did not make Isaiah the most popular person in the kingdom.

**God Deals Uprightly with All**

**Isaiah 56:1-8**

God demands honesty in our dealings with other people and with God Himself. Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and other religious leaders. Can anyone really believe that God does not know what is in their heart?

**Israel's Wicked Leaders and People**

**Isaiah 56:9 – 57:13**

Isaiah was not the only one who claimed to be a prophet. Satan had his false prophets then and now. The “watchmen” who were supposed to guard the people were as corrupt as the leaders; and the people were glad to have it so.

This is the image of inviting the wild beasts [hostile nations] to attack vulnerable sheep. Instead of warning the “sheep” about moral decay, the watchmen were living for themselves and gratifying their selfish desires.

The ungratefulness of Judah's leaders and the people is painfully evident in their perverse idolatry; giving themselves to such abominable practices as religious prostitution and child sacrifice. [57:3-5]

They had rejected the Lord and worshipped inanimate objects and symbols.

**“Adultery and soothsaying are two designations for idolatry. Idolatry involves seeking after information from the creature rather than the Creator and a constant bowing down in worship to the creature; hence it is unfaithfulness to the only One to whom worship may be given.” Young**

Another definition of idolatry is that you control your god.

In the day of judgment Judah’s idols would not be able to deliver these wicked people. [57:13]

### **Comfort for the Upright**

### **Isaiah 57:14 – 21**

God had sent Isaiah on a dangerous mission. It was the twilight years for Judah and Isaiah was sent to warn them of judgment and to call them to repentance. However, the prophet also had words of comfort for the faithful remnant and God’s continuing love and purpose for them.

The faithful remnant would not remain in exile forever. In anticipation of their return to their homeland, God called for the road to be cleared of obstacles. [57:14]

God is ever present with those who trust only in Him. [57:15]

God will not always be angry with His people. [57:16]

Although God punished them for their idolatry and greed, He also promised to restore the faithful remnant. [57:17-18]

This is the cause for praise from the lips of those who had mourned over the destruction of Jerusalem. [57:19]

No matter where the righteous were in exile, God would heal and give them peace; whereas, the wicked can never have any rest or peace. They are as a perpetually churning sea, always casting up mud and mire. [57:20-21]

## **Right and Wrong Forms of Worship**

## **Isaiah 58:1-14**

Next God addressed the people who go through the motions of religion and yet continue to willingly commit sin. These people, God promised to judge, just as the overtly wicked. God will redeem the righteous.

God told Isaiah to “shout it aloud” and to raise his voice as a trumpet to draw attention to the important truths; focusing particularly on their rebellion and sins. [58:1]

From outward appearances these people were diligently seeking the Lord. [58:2]

In fact, these people were accomplished at abstaining from food on fast days and they showed signs of humiliation by bowing their heads and lying on sackcloth and ashes. They even complained that God had not properly responded to their religious actions.

The reason, however, is plain enough. The hypocrite only goes through the outward motions of worship. That is not what God requires of His people. Isaiah foresaw that despite their outward show of humility, the fast days are marred by selfishness, exploitation, strife, and violence. God was not impressed. [58:3-5]

It is not that God is against fasting; He just hates hypocrisy. Practice acts of kindness instead of insincere worship. [58:6-7]

Worship is more than ritual and ceremony.

We can also worship God when we do acts of mercy in His name.

For those who will return to Him in faith, and live lives in honest worship, God promises spiritual healing and protection. [58:8-14]

## **Dealing Candidly with Sin**

## **Isaiah 59:1-21**

God withholds blessing from the post-exilic people because they did not obey Him.

It is not because God is unable to deliver but because of their sin that God withholds blessing. [59:1-4]

Isaiah compares the people to poisonous snakes and spiders, which can only produce more evil and weave webs to ensnare victims. These are metaphors of the destructive wickedness among the people. [59:5-6]

The people could not even conceive of how to live in peace and to treat others fairly. Their way of life was like a morally crooked road. [59:7-8]

What a tragic characterization for a people who claim to be God's people but who are spiritually blind and dead. [59:9-10]

The people had sinned against God and were reaping the consequences of a society void of justice, righteousness, truth, and honesty. Anyone who tried to live uprightly became a victim of the ruthless who ruled society. [59:11-15]

There was no man who could intervene on behalf of the people. God would have to act Himself. [59:16]

Isaiah described God's rescue mission in terms of a warrior going into battle. [17]

The Lord would personally provide righteousness and salvation and He will fight for them. [18-20]

The "Redeemer" is the kinsman-redeemer, referring to one who is related by blood to those he seeks to buy out of slavery. Cf. Leviticus 25:47-49

Lev 25:47-49

<sup>47</sup> And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: <sup>48</sup> After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: <sup>49</sup> Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. KJV

Jesus is the Kinsman-Redeemer of His people.

Isaiah 59:21 is a wonderful conclusion: God's everlasting covenant with those He redeems. Cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20

Jer 31:31-34

<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

<sup>32</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

<sup>33</sup> But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>34</sup> And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Luke 22:20

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.