

ARE WE WORSE THAN A DONKEY?

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The Book of Isaiah the Prophet is one of the largest books in the Bible. Isaiah's book is thus known as one of the "Major Prophets." There are also more quotations of Isaiah in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book aside from Psalms. The obvious implication from that fact is there are many lessons for Christians to learn from the teachings of Isaiah. Those important lessons begin in Isaiah's first words, declaring how Israel had forgotten the One they belonged to.

Forgetting their Owner

Isaiah 1:2-3 says, "*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*" God plainly states His desire that all mankind would consider these words He is speaking to Israel. The Israelites were God's children, but they had rebelled, and had become worse than an ox or a donkey. God was Israel's Owner and Master, yet Israel did not know or even consider about God anymore. They were not even as wise as an ox or donkey. God foretold Israel's rebellion in the Song of Moses. Deuteronomy 32:5-6 says, "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?*" And verse 18 says, "*Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*"

God's requirement

When God first made His covenant with Israel, he clearly delineated His requirement of them, and the basis of that requirement. Deuteronomy 10:12-14 says, "*And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.*" God required Israel to fear Him and keep His commandments. This is based in the fact that God is the Creator, and everything belongs to Him. Therefore, we have no right to do anything other than the will of our Maker and Owner. This is *still* God's basic requirement of mankind, although we are now under the Law of Christ, the New Covenant, rather than the Old. Acts 10:35 says, "*But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*" This is the same principle stated in Ecclesiastes 12:13: "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*" And this "whole duty of man" remains based in the fact that the Lord He is God. Psalm 100:3 says, "*Know ye that the Lord he is*

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(continued)

God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”

Bought with a price

Today, we are doubly owned by Jesus Christ the Son of God. John 1:1-3 says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” Ephesians 3:9 also says that God “created all things by Jesus Christ.” Therefore, Christ owns us first of all because he created us. This is the point of John 1:10-12, which builds on those opening three verses of the book: “*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*” Christ came to “his own,” as they belonged to him who had made them in the first place. To become a child of God, we must believe in the authority (“name”) that Christ possesses as our Maker, and receive him as such. We are “his own” and must not forget our Maker and Owner as Israel did. Secondly, Jesus Christ has bought us with the blood he shed in dying for our sins. “*Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men*” (1 Cor 7:23). Acts 20:28 says that Jesus Christ purchased the church of God with his own blood. To repeat the question God asked in Deuteronomy 32:6, how do we “requite” the Lord? “Requite” means “treat.” How do we treat Christ, who made us, and then died for our sins on the cross? We *should* treat him as 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says we are *constrained* (i.e. obligated or indebted) to: “*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*” Christ gave up his life for us, and we must therefore give up our life for him. How much of our life? How much of his life did he give for us? *All* of it! “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; *that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*” (1 Pet 4:1-2). The *rest of our time* in the flesh should be lived for Christ (see also Galatians 2:20, as Paul described how he was crucified with Christ). This is the point of Colossian 3:17, which says, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” We cannot be Christ’s disciple if we do not choose him as our only Master, taking up the cross, and forsaking all that we have (Luke 14:26-33). In Luke 9:24-25, Christ says, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” Losing our soul is the cost of forgetting who we belong to. To remember our Maker and Owner is to live only to serve him!