

# “LET US REASON TOGETHER”

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The opening statement of the Book of Isaiah is: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (Isa 1:1). Thus, Judah and Jerusalem are the primary targets of God's inspired words through Isaiah, as well as several other prophets. Judah and Jerusalem turned to wickedness and faced destruction from God. And God tried to reason with His people, to bring them to repentance.

## **Like Sodom and Gomorrah**

Isaiah chapter one begins with God's description of the Israelites' rebellion against Him. God called Israel a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa 1:4-6). God equated Israel with Sodom and Gomorrah: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah" (Isa 1:10; see also Jer 23:14-15). Those cities were destroyed by God "making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Pet 2:6). Therefore, anything compared to Sodom and Gomorrah is surely in danger of God's judgment. Lamentations 4:6 says, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." The lesson for us is the same: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet 2:9).

## **Full of hypocrisy**

God was rejecting Israel's sacrifices, burnt offerings, oblations, incense, observances of new moons and sabbaths and feasts, and even their prayers. He was rejecting these things because of the iniquity of the people. Their offerings were hypocritical and insincere. God said, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa 1:11-17). God also told Israel, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). Similarly, Jesus Christ spoke to the Jews in his time: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have

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done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt 23:23). Our religion must also be pure and undefiled before God our Father by our visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world” (Jas 1:27).

## **A city gone bad**

Jerusalem had once been faithful to God and full of judgment and righteousness, but now was full of idolatry and murder. “How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water” (Isa 1:21-22). The city of Jerusalem was originally known as Jebus, and was the capital city of the Jebusites (Judg 19:10-12). David conquered the city and made it his own (1 Chr 11:4-8). In Ezekiel chapter 16, God reviews the history of Jerusalem. In verses 1-6, the Lord recounts her humble beginning: “Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” God chose Jerusalem to be the spiritual capital of Israel, and Solomon’s glorious temple was built there. The Lord said of the city, “And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.”

## **Time to repent**

In Isaiah 1:18-20, God said to Israel, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Tragically, Judah and Jerusalem chose to refuse God and rebel. She became worse than the northern tribes of Israel, and worse than her wicked Gentile neighbors (2 Kgs 17:13-20). Because of this, she reaped the whirlwind and was destroyed (Jer 51; Ezek 5). This warning comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:35-37).