

What's the Message – Lesson 69

We continue our study of the prophets with selected sermons from the book of Isaiah.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Oh God, hear my confession. I am a poor, miserable sinner and sin against your will daily and deserve Your punishment now and forever. But I have confidence in Your promise, in the name of Your Son, that I will be forgiven. Amen.

Last time we saw the historical setting of the ministry of Isaiah and some lessons to be learned from the behavior of the kings of Judah. This has prepared us to see some selected sermons of Isaiah with a better understanding.

Isaiah gets to the core of the matter quickly, and in the very first chapter denounces the people of Judah for breaking the covenant. Hear these words of chapter 1: *Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evil-doers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on Him.* He continues his dialog against the empty ritual of Judah by echoing the rebuke of Amos with these words: *Stop bringing meaningless offerings to me. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. . . Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right.* And this condemnation does not stop at chapter one. Isaiah repeats the point throughout the entire book that they cannot keep on breaking God's covenant and still be protected by the very One they have rejected in their disobedience.

Then in chapter 2 Isaiah introduces one of the major themes that would be picked up and echoed by other prophets, the idea of the exaltation of Mt. Zion. We read: *In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will*

come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.

Here Isaiah predicts that Jerusalem will become the religious center, not just for Judah, but for all nations. It is a foreshadowing of the words of Jesus in Matthew 8:11, *I tell you that many will come from east and west to sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*”

Isaiah not only warns Judah that there will be a day of judgment, he then brings up another new idea, the idea of a faithful remnant that will survive the time of punishment. This theme of judgment for their wrongdoings and the counter theme of the mercy and forgiveness of God are contrasted many times, back and forth. Chapter 5 of Isaiah is a message of “woes” much like the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 23, where Jesus pronounces woes upon the Pharisees, scribes, and hypocrites. Yes, *Jerusalem has stumbled; Judah has fallen (3:8)*, but it would not be a permanent doom, there would be a continuation of the house of David.

Hear these familiar words of chapter 9, verses 6 and 7: *For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.* And there are many more familiar words, such as these from chapter 11: *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

There are a few more words from chapter 11 that apply here. In verse 10 we read: *In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His place of rest will be*

glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out His hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of His people . . . He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Quoting John Bright again, Isaiah loathed a society that was more “concerned for its living standard above all things (3:16-4:1 and 32:9-14), and all too often besotted with debauchery (5:11-12, 22 and 28:1-8).

“And worst of all he hated that pride, complacent in its power, which seeks to dispose of life itself without reference to God. That pride is the very essence of sin (2:9-22)! This people must learn that God does not tolerate such behavior; and if they will not hear the lesson spelled out in plain Hebrew, then God will be forced to teach it to them in Assyrian (28:9-13)!” And we could add: or in English!

You can almost hear God say today, “hear this, my children of America.” But Professor Bright continues: “Isaiah’s attack on the sins of society was uncompromising. And it proceeded from precisely the same feeling for the covenant relationship between Israel and God which had moved Amos and Hosea. God has indeed called Israel to be His people. But the bond between them is not mechanical . . . but reciprocal: it demands obedience.” Not just the outward performance of ritual, but a feeling of giving thanks to God for His great mercy. Does this not apply to us today as well as to the Children of Israel?

Teacher, it seems to me you have shown clearly with each of these mini-sermons we have summarized . . . what the message is for us today. So I will not need to ask you my usual question. However, these lessons have been so pertinent and applicable, that it also appears we will need to spend another lesson on more of the sermons of Isaiah.

