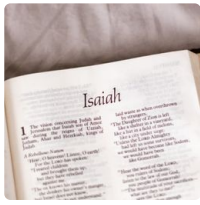


# OpenTheo

## Isaiah 1 - 2



### Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah offers hope in the midst of judgment. Steve Gregg's rapid survey of Isaiah 1-2 emphasizes the prophet's vision of the coming Messiah and Messianic age. Isaiah denounces Israel and Judah for their lack of justice and calls them to repent and seek righteousness. The prophet warns them to turn away from idolatry and trust in God rather than human alliances.

### Transcript

Well, we're going to begin a very rapid survey through Isaiah. I mean rapid as I would consider rapidity. I normally would go through Isaiah pausing probably every verse and talk about every little thing that might have a cross-reference that could be brought into it and so forth, but we have spent several sessions, most of last week actually, looking at the topics and the themes and motifs, the various ways in which Isaiah figuratively portrays things.

Much of the message of Isaiah, of course, is about the judgment of his own nation and the judgment of the northern kingdom of Israel because Isaiah lived and began preaching before the fall of the northern kingdom, though Israel did fall to the Assyrians right about in the middle of Isaiah's ministry, and then he continued to preach for, or write, for at least as long again. And this time only to his own nation, of course. Once the northern kingdom had fallen, there was nothing more to be said about them except to point to them as a reminder and a warning for the southern kingdom that was going very much in the same direction.

The southern kingdom lasted, that is Isaiah's kingdom, Judah, lasted about 140 years longer than the northern kingdom. And yet already in Isaiah's day, already when this northern kingdom was falling, Judah was picking up on some of the habits that were those which brought the demise of the northern kingdom and so he could see and warn about that. Now in Isaiah, we talked about in our introduction some of the ways the book divides into smaller subsections and I'd like to remind you that chapters 1 through 6, although their subject matter is diverse, in general are talking about Judah.

Now, whenever we say a section of Isaiah is about such and such, we have to remember that he breaks away from his main subject. No matter what his main subject is in any part of the book, he can't be trusted to stay on topic because he breaks away and begins to discuss Messiah or the messianic age. And that is, of course, not his fault.

That is exactly the thing most important for all believers of all times. And one reason we benefit from reading Isaiah is because he does talk about the Messiah. If he only talked about ancient wars and events in the falls of ancient empires, people with a historical bent would take an interest but it wouldn't be spiritually as edifying and as helpful as to find what we do find when he interjects a passage about Christ.

But apart from such interruptions, the first six chapters are largely concerned with judgment on his own nation of Judah. And then the next six after that, chapters 7 through 12, are about judgment on Israel, the northern kingdom. And then chapters 13 through 23 are about judgment on nations further out than that.

He looks at his own nation first. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Jerusalem was where the temple was.

It was his own country. He's got to clean up his own backyard first. And so he addresses his own nation for six chapters.

He addresses the northern kingdom, which is a little further out but not much. The sister nation in the next six chapters. And then he takes chapters 13 through 23, 11 chapters to discuss foreign nations.

Although one of those chapters, even 22, is about his own nation, Judah. And the fact that he inserts a chapter about Judah in a block of chapters that is about pagan nations is no doubt intentional and suggestive. That Judah has got to be considered right along with the pagan nations.

There's not one much better. It's interesting too that he just sticks in a chapter about Judah just before he's done with that whole section. Because there's one more chapter about a pagan nation after chapter 22.

It seems like if he was going to be completely topical, he would have done all the pagan nations first and stuck on the prophecy against Judah after he was done. Instead, he's going one pagan nation after another. And he's got a certain total number he wants to take.

And just before he's finished, he sticks in something about Judah. As if to say, Judah is really quite integrated in the whole mass, spiritually and morally, with the pagan nations. And it's not really to be considered that separate anymore.

So this is what we're going to be looking at for the first 23 chapters. Sort of an expanding

vision. First from his own nation, then to Israel, then to the pagan nations.

And the message of these chapters is going to be judgment. Interspersed with hopeful things. Some of those hopeful things are going to be messianic passages.

Others, other hopeful things, will not specifically be about the messianic kingdom, but rather an appeal to the very people he's denouncing to turn around, to come and reason with God. Their sins could become white as wool, though they're like scarlet. So he, in other words, still offers some hope.

He tells them what's wrong and spends time describing their condition as it is doomed, or appears to be on the fast track to doom. And yet he warns them to repent. And he does say that if they would repent, even now it's not too late, they could be cleansed.

So we've got sort of a mixture of going back and forth from saying things that are denouncing, threatening, hopeful, threatening again, denouncing again, hopeful. Once in a while a passage in there about the messianic era, which of course is the ultimate hopeful thing. So, the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah, Jopham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Now, notice it says he saw this vision, and clearly not everything in here is visionary. Some of it is. The main vision we know about is in chapter 6, where he saw the Lord in the temple high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

But a vision often refers simply to the revelation given to a prophet. And it probably came to him in various ways, and we won't speculate too much how, because we don't have time to linger on that. But he refers almost to the whole book as the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

It says he saw this during the reigns of four kings, and he includes Isaiah. And yet in chapter 6, we see in the year that King Isaiah died, chapter 6, verse 1, I saw the Lord. And this chapter describes what looks like a commissioning to be a prophet.

Now, it may be that he was already a prophet before this chapter, and that this commissioning is simply an affirmation or reaffirmation of his call, or maybe giving some new impetus or some new direction to his ministry. It's possible this call came sometime after his ministry had begun, but most seem to feel that this is... He's telling us in chapter 6 how he came to be a prophet. He had a vision of God, and God commissioned him, touched coal to his lips, so to speak, and purged his lips, and made him clean and suitable to speak the words of God to the people.

If we were to take that view, which I think would be a majority view, then it would seem that when he says, in the year that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord, he must have seen the Lord that year, but prior to the death of King Isaiah. That year forever after would be remembered as the year that King Isaiah died. But it doesn't mean he had died before

this vision happened.

It was just that year. It probably was earlier in that year, before Isaiah died, but still the same year that Isaiah died in, that this vision happened. That would explain why he could say in verse 1 of chapter 1 that some of his prophecies were uttered during the time of Isaiah.

Maybe only less than a year's worth of them, but he would include then Isaiah among those kings during whose reign he ministered. And he begins, verse 2, So, the description of his people that he gives here is in verse 2, they have rebelled against me. In verse 3, Israel does not know.

And here Israel would mean both kingdoms, I suppose. His opening words would be applicable to both kingdoms, all 12 tribes, although he's going to move quickly in the direction of speaking of Jerusalem and Judah, his own section of that 12 tribe group. And then he says they've turned away backward in verse 4. So, they've rebelled, they don't know God, they've backslidden.

Now he likens them to children who were brought up properly, but went the wrong way. Which is a little bit encouraging for parents whose kids have gone the wrong way, that even God, who is no doubt as perfect a parent as anyone could be, sometimes has his kids go the wrong way, they depart from him. There is, of course, a statement in the Proverbs that parents often quote, Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he's old he will not depart from it.

From which we like to derive a promise that if we just do the right thing, raising our children, we'll never have any problems with them afterwards, they'll be godly and it'll be blissful and all wonderful. However, the Proverbs, including that statement, are not to be understood as promises, but tendencies, generalities, likelihoods. Proverbs is wisdom literature, not prophetic literature.

And wisdom literature is observational. It observes trends and recommends courses of action to reach certain results. And therefore, if you want your kids to go right, you should train them right.

That's what he's saying. And in general, because Proverbs are always general, not absolute. In general, you raise your kids right, they'll go right.

But there's no real guarantees, it's not an ironclad guarantee. And God himself certainly cannot be accused of having been a poor parent. If anyone knows how to be a good parent, it would be he.

And yet he says, I have nourished and brought up children. The very thing that Paul says fathers are commissioned to do over in Ephesians 6, he says you should bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Certainly God had done that, as he

will say in chapter 5, comparing his family Israel to a vineyard rather than to a family.

He says, I've done everything to get the right results from this vineyard. But I haven't gotten what I thought I'd get. I should have gotten good grapes, but I got bad grapes.

I should have had good kids, but I got bad kids. And this is of course obviously the risk that God took in making persons with free will. If there is no free will, it's hard to explain verses like this or that in Isaiah 5. Where God says, I did what I should have done, and I got what I shouldn't have gotten.

Well there must be something then besides God in the picture. There must be something other than God's will determining some outcomes. And there is, it's human will.

Now human will cannot thwart God's overall purposes. But it can thwart God's purposes for the individual. And some people have a hard time understanding that.

But the illustration I heard when I was young that I repeat often, that I think is good. Is if you're on a cruise ship, the ship is going to go where the captain says it's going to go. The individual passengers may do any number of things aboard ship.

They might even jump ship and not end up at the destination. But the ship's going where it's going because the captain has determined that. The captain determines where the ship will be.

The passengers decide whether they'll be on the ship when it gets there. And what they'll do in the meantime. There's a lot of free will there.

There's a lot of freedom of movement and choice. But none of the passengers are going to determine where the ship ends up. That's the captain's choice.

And God is determining where history will go. In the meantime, he lets people have the dignity of participating with him or not. Of going on the journey or not.

Of behaving well or behaving poorly on the way. That's the free will thing. And that always involves some risk.

If you want to have in your household no rebels, get Labrador Retrievers. You know? If you want to have children, you take a risk. Because children are different than Labrador Retrievers.

Labs don't have any choice. People do. And unfortunately, people with choice have made a habit historically of making wrong choices.

And God's children included. And he says, they're stupider than livestock. Oxen know who their owner is.

The donkeys know who feeds them. What their master's manger is. And he says, my people are not as smart as they are.

Now, of course, this illustrates what I was just saying. The donkey and the ox are not to be overly commended for what they do. They do everything instinctively.

They do what they're programmed to do. And yet God programmed them to be obedient so that they put to shame those of us who could be obedient without being programmed. It's not like we say, well, of course they obey.

They're programmed to. If God would program me to obey, I'd obey too. Well, why don't you obey without being programmed? Why didn't you obey just because you could? Because God gave you that option.

He gives you a free choice. Why don't you just obey? You could behave as wisely as a donkey if you would. Or even more wisely than that.

But when you act less wisely, it's to your shame. And a similar comparison is made over in Jeremiah chapter 8. Not to livestock, but to migratory birds. In Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 7, God said, Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times, and the turtledove, the swift and the swallow, observe the time of their coming.

But my people do not know the judgment of the Lord. That is, the birds instinctively migrate at the proper season to the proper places. And I don't know how much Jeremiah knew about that, but scientists today know some amazing things about how migratory birds do great feats of navigation.

Over open sea, hummingbirds fly over the Gulf of Mexico for several days without resting. Their wings beating at over 100 times a minute, and their heartbeat must be through the roof. And yet they don't even rest for several days as they cross the Gulf of Mexico and end up in just the place they're supposed to end up.

How'd they know over that open sea which way to turn, which way to go? How'd they even know where they're going anyway, those little bird brains? And you know, there are plovers in the Aleutian Islands in Alaska who, they winter in Hawaii and they go up and breed in the spring in the Aleutian Islands. They lay their eggs and their babies hatch. They feed their babies.

And just a few days before the babies are ready to leave the nest, the parents take off for Hawaii and say, good luck, kids. And they take off. But no problem.

A few days later, the babies leave the nest and they fly to Hawaii too. Never been there. How do they know how to get there? And it's over open sea the entire way without any landmarks.

How do they even know where they're going? Well, of course, God does this to shame two groups of people. One is us when we make wrong choices and we don't go the way God wants us to. Even the birds do.

Why can't we? It also shames the evolutionists, it seems to me. Because obviously these behaviors could never have evolved. They had to be built in by an intelligent creator.

Well, so this is God's complaint. Israel has been given every advantage to do well. They've done poorly.

Verse 5, why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faints from the sole of the foot even to the head. There's no soundness in it but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

They have not been closed up or bound up or soothed with ointment. Now, we won't go into this now because we looked at this earlier in our topical talks. This is the imagery of the nation being a man, wounded and therefore sick.

Wounded and has become sick apparently by infection. The sores are open. They've not been treated.

It's like the beaten man alongside the road in the story of the Good Samaritan. He's been beaten up. He's laying around.

No one's helped him. His sores are running. He's probably in danger of infectious disease setting in.

This is the condition of the nation. Now, what is it actually referring to? It's not referring to literally a man being beat up. It's talking about apparently Judah at the time of the Assyrian invasions in all likelihood.

The exact time of this particular prophecy is not given to us but it describes the circumstances in verses 7 and 8 in such a way that it seems like it's when Assyria came and wiped out all the villages of Judah and left only Jerusalem and they didn't leave Jerusalem deliberately. They intended to take Jerusalem but God spared Jerusalem. This event is described much later in Isaiah chapter 36 through 37 in what are more historical narrative chapters and we know the story because we find it in 2 Kings.

We find it in 2 Chronicles and we find it in Isaiah 36 through 37. So we see the story is found three times in historical writings and the condition at that time where the cities of Judah, the villages of Judah have been destroyed and only Jerusalem is left seems to be described in verse 7. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire. Strangers devour your land in your presence and it is desolate as overthrown by strangers.

So the daughter of Zion, meaning the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of it, is left as

a booth in a vineyard. Now a booth in a vineyard is the only structure standing there. A vineyard doesn't have a lot of buildings in it.

It's mainly got grapevines but a booth would be an exception. Maybe a worker's shed where they could sit in the shade during the heat of the day or keep tools or whatever. So there's like one structure there in the vineyard and Jerusalem has become like the only standing structure in the land of Judah.

Everything else is raised to the ground. Like a hut in a garden of cucumbers as a besieged city. So it looks like Jerusalem is besieged at this time and therefore we'd assume that the Assyrians are the aggressors because we know of such a circumstance in Isaiah's lifetime.

He says, unless the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah. Which means they were wiped out completely. We haven't been.

God has been merciful to leave us a very tiny remnant of survivors. Jerusalem is the survivors of the land of Judah in this case. And if God hadn't left that, we'd have been completely wiped out.

We'd be extinct like Sodom and Gomorrah. But then after having said that, he says, you know, the comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah is really apt in more ways than one. Not just in that God has left a remnant to us which is different than Sodom but has almost wiped us out like them.

But we are kind of a Sodom and Gomorrah. And there's more than once that Isaiah uses a comparison to Sodom and his own people. And in Revelation chapter 11 and verse 8, the city where our Lord was crucified as it's referred to in that verse, which would clearly be Jerusalem, is said to be spiritually called Sodom and Egypt.

And no doubt the book of Revelation is alluding back to these verses where God has referred to Jerusalem as Sodom. Well, if Jerusalem is Sodom, it hardly makes them seem like a chosen people of God. And Sodom, the very name suggests annihilation is coming.

And he says in verse 10, Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. He's not talking to Sodom and Gomorrah.

He's talking about Jerusalem and Judah. He's calling them by those names. Sodom and Gomorrah had been extinct for many centuries before this.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or goats. Before, excuse me, when you come to appear before me, who has required this from your hand to trample my courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices.



Incense is an abomination to me. The new moons, the Sabbath, the callings of assemblies. I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred assembly.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hates. They are trouble to me. I'm weary of burying them.

When you spread out your hands, meaning in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

That is, they're guilty of having shed blood. And so God sees the blood of innocent victims on their hands. How can they raise such wicked hands? Remember what Paul said to Timothy.

He says, I will that men everywhere pray lifting holy hands. And so these people are raising wicked hands. And so he does not hear their prayers.

I won't listen to you when you raise your hands. You can make as many prayers as you want to. It's not gonna make a difference.

Now, in saying that he abhors their sacrifices and their new moons and their incense and things, it would be a mistake to say that at this point, God is saying in general, he hates those kinds of things because he ordained those things. Through the law of Moses, those are the actual forms of worship that God ordained and required. So, of course, we know that all those things that are listed here were abolished in the new covenant, but it would be a mistake to think that Isaiah is here anticipating the new covenant.

He is not saying God's done with the sacrificial system now, so stop it. He's saying when you worship me in all these prescribed ways, you only worship me in the external forms, your heart isn't with me at all. Or as Isaiah says later on, these people draw near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

The idea here is that God hates religious, even if the forms are right, if the heart is wrong. And this is made clear back in a couple of times in Proverbs, like in Proverbs 15, 8. Proverbs 15, 8 says, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight. That is, if a person is generally a wicked person, but they go to the temple and offer a sacrifice, they're doing the formal worship of God, but they're wicked.

They're not a godly person, they're wicked. Well, why would they be offering sacrifices? Well, who can say? There might be any number of motives people would have who don't love God, who participate outwardly in religious activities. Maybe to gain a reputation of being religious.

Maybe for some other reason. But the point is that if a person is personally wicked in their behavior, in their choices, in their lifestyle, and then they interrupt that wickedness

for a moment to go to the temple and offer a sacrifice, that sacrifice is not pleasing to God. It's an abomination to God.

It means it stinks before God. But the prayer of the upright person is God's delight. So he notices not the outward, but more or less the lifestyle and the heart rather than the ritual.

In Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 27, we have essentially the same thought with a different addendum to it. Proverbs 21, 27 says, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination. How much more when he brings it with a wicked intent? Now the idea here is the man is wicked because of his general behavior day by day.

A man who's wicked in his general behavior day by day might bring a sacrifice with the hopes of pleasing God. It's still an abomination because he's a wicked man rather than a godly man. He's not repentant.

He's just coming to try to placate God with a sacrifice without changing his life. Even if his motives at the moment that he offers his sacrifice happen to be decent motives, the fact that he's a wicked man, unrepentant in general, makes the sacrifice unacceptable. Here it adds, And if he offers it with an evil intent, all the worse.

How much worse? How much more is an abomination if in addition to being a wicked man, he has bad motives for coming to the temple in the first place? He has bad motives for worshipping God externally. So this is really the problem that Judah had, that Isaiah is complaining about, that God's complaining about. They're bringing their sacrifices.

They're keeping the ritual, but their heart is far from God and their behavior is inappropriate, not acceptable to God. He explains, Your hands are full of blood. And in verse 16, Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes.

Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice.

Reprove the oppressor. Defend the fatherless. Plead for the widow.

Now, the main things God complains about in much of the prophets is the lack of justice in the society of Israel and Judah. And that lack of justice is seen pretty much in the way the poor are treated by oppressors. Now, the oppressors, is here not referring to, you know, tyrants from other countries that invade and take over.

It's talking about the, just the rich neighbors, the rich and greedy neighbors of the poor who find ways to seize property, to, as Jesus put it to, he said the Pharisees rob widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. He says, therefore, they're worthy of the double condemnation. They make long prayers.

That's like offering a sacrifice. But privately, they're seizing the property of widows unjustly. And how this is done is not necessary to go into, but the point is, for example, everybody had territorial lands that Joshua had divided up among the families in his day and that were supposed to stay in the family generation after generation.

These lands were demarcated from their neighbor's lands by landmarks. One of the laws that Moses gave was you shall not move the landmarks. Well, why would that be an issue? Well, it means that if you go out at night when your neighbor's not paying attention, you move the landmark between your property over, you've gained some property and he's lost some.

You've actually moved the boundaries in your favor. You've stolen his property. Now, if the person who you did that against happened to be a poor person, or the most typical example of poor people were widows and orphans, you know, she might come out and say, wait a minute, that's not where that was.

You've just stolen some of my ancestral property. And the neighbor says, sue me. So she goes to court, and the rich guy, the neighbor who stole the property, bribes the judge.

And the judge says, yeah, I think that should stay just as it is. And the widow doesn't have any money to bribe the judge, so she's oppressed by the richer neighbors who actually have the way of bribing judges. And it's very often a complaint in the prophets that this was commonly done.

And no doubt there were other ways that people who could bribe judges could also take advantage of the poor who had no money to grease the palms of the magistrates. So he says, you've got to turn that around, seek justice, reprove the oppressor. The person who's taking advantage of the poor, reprove that person, and defend the fatherless, and plead for the widow.

By the way, this same concern comes up later in this chapter in verse 23. In Isaiah 123, it says, Your princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes and follows after rewards.

They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them. That is, they won't judge righteously or defend the fatherless or the widow. Why? Because they love bribes, and that's what they get from the richer people.

So the poor people are oppressed because the courts are corrupt. Come now, verse 18, and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Now, if you refuse and rebel, we've just been told in verse 2 that that's exactly what they've

already been doing.

They are rebelling. He means if you continue in this course of rebellion, you're going to be slaughtered. Enemies are going to take over.

You should be able to read the writing on the wall. Your cities and villages are already burned to the ground by oppressors. Only Jerusalem is left.

What makes you think Jerusalem is going to stand with your present behavior as it is? If you are willing and obedient, things will go better for you. The oppressors will go away. The Assyrians will be driven off.

You can plant crops again, and you can eat the good of the land again. Right now, the Assyrians are eating all your crops. Because you people are besieged in the city.

There's no crops in the city. The croplands are always outside the walled cities. So, in times of war, the farmers would flee into the city.

They'd close the gates and have a fortress against the invaders. The invaders, by the way, would be out where the farmlands are, and they'd eat the crops. And so, he says, this could be turned around.

You could eat the good of the land instead of your enemies eating it. But you have to be willing and obedient. Now, obedience is one thing, but being willing is something more.

Because, again, outward obedience, in some ways, was already happening in some ways. They were going to the temple, offering sacrifices. They weren't obeying the moral law, but they were obeying some laws.

But even if they obeyed the moral laws, if they were unwilling, if they were doing it unwillingly, not from their heart, it would not be what God's asking for. God's asking for people to obey from the heart, willingly. They need to have a change.

Now, he likens them to being stained with sin. Stained like scarlet and crimson. These are colorfast dyes that they had.

Once you dye wool or whatever with crimson or with scarlet, it was in to stay. You couldn't just undo that. But God says, but I can.

If your sins are stained, you're like scarlet dye or like crimson. It's still possible for you to be cleansed completely and be as white as snow. But you're going to have to be willing and obedient and you're going to turn around and not continue in the course you're on.

Verse 21, How has the faithful city become a harlot? It was full of justice. Righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. It's hard to know exactly when justice lodged in it.

I mean, this is probably uttered before the time of Hezekiah, who was a righteous guy. And it certainly is before the time of Josiah, who was righteous. He may be going all the way back to the time of David when David was ruling and made Jerusalem the capital.

David was initially a man after God's own heart. And although we read more about the personal history of David than we do about the state of the society in Jerusalem during his reign, we perhaps should understand since Isaiah or God is saying so here that maybe during David's reign, it was not only that David was a man after God's own heart, but the city itself was administrated through justice and righteousness. And that was its beginning as a Jewish city.

Before David's time, Jerusalem was a Canaanite city and David conquered it and made it a Jewish city. And at its very beginning as a Jewish city, it was faithful to God under David, perhaps is what's involved in my view. But now it is degenerate, so they're murderers, not righteousness in there.

Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water. Now, silver, obviously, is something of value. Dross is something you'd cast away and get rid of when you've refined silver.

Your wine is mixed with water. That's not necessarily bad. People did mix their water with wine, but it diluted it.

And what he's saying is your things that were once desirable at you have degenerated, is what he's saying. And it's the leaders who are the problem. He's going to say in verses 24 and 25, Therefore the Lord says, The Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will rid myself of my adversaries and take vengeance on my enemies.

I will turn my hand against you and thoroughly purge away your dross and take away your alloy. I will restore your judges as at the first and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterwards, you should be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

So in verse 21, what was once the faithful city has become an unfaithful city. And at the end, God intends that he will purge that city, remove the dross, and make it a faithful city again. The dross is what? His adversaries, his enemies.

In verse 24, I will rid myself of my adversaries, take vengeance on my enemies. That's synonymous with I'll thoroughly purge the dross and the alloy. These wicked apostate Jews in the city are the alloy that makes the city faithless.

And they are the rulers. Verse 23 makes it very clear. Your princes are rebellious.

They're the companions of thieves. Princes are the rulers of the city. It's corrupt leaders.

They are the alloy that has to be purged from the city. But there will be a remnant. And

he says in verse 27, Zion shall be redeemed with justice and her penitence, penitence means people who have repented.

This would be the remnant within the city. Her penitence will be redeemed with righteousness. The destruction of transgressors and of sinners shall be together and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed for they shall be ashamed of the terebinth trees which were objects of worship or at least in places of worship they had terebinth groves.

And these were shrines where the Canaanites had formerly worshipped their gods in the high places. And usually the better kings would do their best to try to remove these high places though some failed even who wanted to because there were so many of them. People tended to gravitate toward these idolatrous shrines with the terebinth trees and so forth, the groves.

And he says that you'll be ashamed of those when you've repented you'll be ashamed of your idolatry from the past which you've desired and you shall be embarrassed because of the gardens which you've chosen. Again referring to gardens in these high places where they worshipped idols. For you shall be as a terebinth tree whose leaf fades and as a garden that has no water.

The strong shall be as tinder and the work of it as a spark. Both will burn together and no one will quench them as in italics. No one will quench just how it is.

Now this is talking about God judging his adversaries removing the dross. And he says they'll be like trees that have lost their leaf. These are like gardens that wither.

But he says they're going to be burned up and it's interesting if you notice verse 31 that the burning he refers to it says no one shall quench. Now he's not referring to hell here. He's referring to the temporal judgment on the city.

He's talking about the wicked being judged and with the typical imagery. You know his imagery is very diverse and fire is a very common image for judgment in general, judgment of the nation. Even when he may not be talking about literally burning down a city although in many cases that's exactly what happened.

But if it's not literally talking about literal fire it is nonetheless the fiery wrath of God. It's God's wrath is burning against him. In fact in Jeremiah similar language is used and frequently God talks about how his wrath will burn against them and shall not be quenched.

Now the thing about shall not be quenched of course reminds us of the expression unquenchable fire. Which Jesus uses for example in Mark 9 when he's talking about Gehenna. And he talks about you know better to be thrown not to be thrown in Gehenna where there's unquenchable fire.

Where he says the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. Those two lines come from the last verse of Isaiah. Actually the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

And because it says the fire is not quenched or it's unquenchable fire many people assume this must be referring to like supernatural fire because fire usually can be quenched but this fire is never quenched. It must be eternal fire so it must be hell. But I would just point out to you that it's a common expression in the Old Testament to talk about God's judgment as a fire that cannot be quenched.

It means cannot be quenched by man. That is man cannot resist it. When God decides to judge and his judgment comes on man doesn't have the resources to stop it.

And that's clear especially the way it's worded in Isaiah 131 where he says no one shall quench it. It doesn't say it cannot be quenched but it could say that. It would mean the same thing.

It cannot be quenched by people. No one can quench it. If God ignites it no man could quench it.

And here the fire may be literal fire in terms of the burning of cities and so forth but it could also simply refer to the fire of God's wrath. It says in Hebrews chapter 12 our God is a consuming fire and his wrath is often referred to as fire figuratively. Now chapter 2 begins with that famous Messianic passage which we have taken in some detail and cannot do again just because our time will not allow but we can read it again.

This is about how the new Jerusalem under the Messiah's reign will be a place of educating not only Israel but the nations as well. People from all nations will come and ascend to the hill of the Lord which is a figure for the church, the body of Christ, the new Jerusalem, the spiritual Zion as the writer of Hebrews points out. And so the Gentiles come into the church and there they are to be taught the ways of God and they will walk in those ways.

And as a result of doing so they give up their warlike hostilities toward others perhaps because there are others in the church of other nationalities that once were their national enemies. The church is made up of all nations including nations that have been very hostile to each other. By the way the Gentiles in general were generally seen as hostile to the Jews and the Jews toward them.

So the cessation of hostilities is implied from the very suggestion that the Gentiles will come into Jerusalem to learn. It means that the warlike relations that have existed between them before are now over and there's now peaceable. And the imagery of putting away their weapons and adopting implements of farming instead, you know peacetime vocations.

There's a shortage of metal so you need to use the metal you've got and you don't need swords and spears anymore. You can take that metal and beat it into the kind of farming implements you want. Things that will be productive rather than destructive.

It says the word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills and all the nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob and he will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations as he'll rule all the Gentiles who come in there and administrate in their relationships and so forth like a judge does. And shall rebuke many people they shall beat their swords into plowshares their spears into pruning hooks nations shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore. And as I've said if those last lines refer to all people on the planet then we'd have a warless world and therefore some taking it that way have said this can't be about now this must be about the millennium when Jesus comes back.

But since the nations that are involved are the ones who are flowing into the house of the Lord it's clear it's referring to the Gentiles who become converts not the nations as national entities globally on the whole and universally it's talking about those who come and learn the ways of God at Mount Zion. They don't learn war anymore. They don't fight anymore.

That's not a Christian vocation anymore. Now verse 5 says O house of Israel come and let us walk in the light of the Lord. It's interesting how Isaiah sometimes just shifts his addressee sometimes he's talking to one person sometimes to someone else like here he specifically is talking to his own nation saying let's obey God.

But then he speaks to God in verse 6 For you have forsaken your people the house of Jacob because they are filled with Eastern ways they're soothsayers like the Philistines they are pleased with the children of foreigners their land is also full of silver and gold there's no end to their treasures their land is also full of horses and there's no end to their chariots their land is also full of idols they worship the work of their own hands that which their own fingers have made people bow down and each man humbles himself therefore do not forgive them. So here's the national sins that Isaiah complains about and no doubt he is on the same he's sympathetic with the same things God's concerned about they've borrowed ways from the East now east of Israel would be of course pagan nations and the things mentioned specifically are things like soothsayers now the Philistines are not to the east but to the west of Judah but apparently east and west the occult is coming into the society of the Jews instead of consulting God they are



consulting soothsayers and such we find over in chapter 7 or excuse me, chapter 8 it says in verse 19 when they say to you seek those who are mediums and wizards who whisper and mutter should not a people seek their God? should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? it's obvious that he's rebuking something that's really going on they are seeking mediums and wizards and soothsayers they're adopting occultic practices when they are supposed to be the special people of the Lord why do you consult demons and why do you consult the dead when you could consult God? shouldn't the people consult their God? they're also in chapter 2 verse 7 very wealthy and because of that apparently have become very materialistic and self-satisfied and they're militaristic too they're materialistic and they're militaristic because it says they've got a ton of horses and chariots and those are military equipment not like the cowboy days where a horse was a vehicle for ordinary travel in Israel at that time probably camels and donkeys would be more common for that horses were for battle chariots were they weren't simply a fancy kind of stagecoach they were more like an army tank in those days their land is also full of idols so they're occultists, they're materialistic they're militaristic, they're idolatrous which sounds kind of like of course other nations besides them and not too far removed from our own so if these are the conditions that God judged his own people for then I don't know that any other nation should feel itself secure following these ways in the face of God's disapproval of them now what we have from verse 10 on through the chapter is a poem that has some refrains that keep coming up for example the expression in verse 10 from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty is repeated in verse 19 and in verse 21 in the latter two cases 19 and 20 he adds another phrase when he arises to shake the earth mightily in both cases so in verse 10 it says enter into the rock and hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty then in verse 19 they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake the land or earth mightily I think it's land here and then in verse 21 to go into the clefts of the rocks and into the crags of the rugged rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake the earth or the land mightily and we find that this is an expression or an image that Jesus brought up and I've pointed this out in other lectures before in Luke 23 when Jesus is on his way to be crucified and the daughters of Jerusalem are weeping after him and he says daughters of Jerusalem don't weep for me weep for yourselves and for your children and he talks about how the time is coming in their lifetime that they'll wish they'd never had children and in verse 30 he says then they will begin to say to the mountains fall on us and the hills cover us and we find this also in Revelation chapter 6 when the sixth seal is broken we find the people all crying out to the mountains and the hills and the rocks to cover them from the anger of the Lord it says in verse 16 of Revelation 6 they said to the mountains and the rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne from the wrath of the Lamb apparently this theme is common that when there's great calamity some people would hide in caves Josephus tells us that when the Romans broke through the walls of Jerusalem there were caves in the city that some people hid in but the Romans went in

and found them anyway but this recurring statement in Isaiah 2, 10, 19, and 21 is from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty it's interesting those two thoughts terror and glory that God is glorified, his majesty is glorified in a way that is in fact terrible to those who are his enemies and in verse 11 we have a refrain that is also repeated in verse 17 so there's a lot of repetition in this section in verse 11 he says the lofty looks of man shall be humbled the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day then we read in verse 17 the same thing the loftiness of man shall be bowed down the haughtiness of men shall be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day well if you look over at chapter 5 in verse 16 you see the same thoughts not verbatim but helpfully explaining what is meant by the statement the Lord alone will be exalted in that day in chapter 5 in verse 16 actually 15 and 16 chapter 5, 15 and 16 says people shall be brought down each man shall be humbled which is the same thought we just read and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled but the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness now God is exalted in his judgment in Isaiah it says God alone will be exalted in that day but he's referring to when God judges the wicked he's exalting himself by vindicating his own cause against those who thought they could stand against him with impunity now that verse 11 and verse 17 end with the phrases in that day now what we will find going through the book of Isaiah is the expression in that day occurs a great deal and you'd think well it must be a technical term for a particular day but it actually isn't sometimes it's a day of judgment sometimes it's a day of judgment on a particular nation sometimes it's the messianic age in that day although the phrase remains the same throughout it's not always the same day and we need to be careful about that it just is saying it's just sort of the way that Isaiah introduces the idea of a particular time when something is going to happen he's describing he's not talking about a particular day that all these references apply to and I say Isaiah because he uses this expression in that day more than anyone else in the Bible Isaiah uses it 43 times in that day, in that day, in that day, 43 times in 66 chapters Jeremiah uses it only 5 times and Jeremiah is a longer book in terms of pages than Isaiah so Jeremiah uses it 5 times, Isaiah 43 times Ezekiel uses it 7 times it's found quite a bit in Zechariah 20 times in Zechariah but it's found most of all in Isaiah and we're going to run into it again and again throughout the book obviously in that day, in that day, but we need to be careful not to think it's always talking about the same day because it isn't this particular day that God will be exalted in judgment is the day that he judges Judah it is either referring to a destruction that would come upon Jerusalem by the Assyrians but which was turned away by the repentance of Hezekiah in other words God is threatening judgments that would in fact come unless they repent just like Jonah when he said 40 days Nineveh will perish, he didn't say unless you repent but it was implied and they did repent and so it didn't come in 40 days so he might be referring to an impending judgment that Jerusalem would certainly experience at this time unless of course they repent which he has called them to do, he said if you'll be willing and obedient you'll eat the good of the land otherwise you're going to fall by the sword so all of his threats of judgment seem to

be in light of this condition unless of course you repent and that did happen at the last minute Hezekiah the king of Judah did repent and God did deliver them from Assyria on the other hand this could be looking more further forward to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC in that case Jerusalem wasn't spared and God did have it out with them and He did glorify Himself by and exalt Himself by judging them likewise of course we know that the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon was a type and a shadow which was found its repeat in 70 AD so it's hard to know exactly if it's one of these occasions that's being spoken of here or the whole just the whole category of God judging His people which He spared them ultimately in the Assyrian threat but not in the Babylonian threat in any case He says that this is how He's going to respond if they keep living in sin it says in verse 18 the idols I should read a little more of that I'm afraid verse 12 for the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty upon everything lifted up and it shall be brought low He means of course on every proud person and everything in which they place their pride upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up upon all the oaks of Bashan upon all the high mountains and upon all the hills that are lifted up upon every high tower every fortified wall all these are going to fall because they are things in which people place confidence and pride upon all the ships of Tarshish upon all the beautiful sloops the loftiness of man shall be bowed down the haughtiness of men shall be brought low the Lord alone will be exalted in that day but the idols He shall utterly abolish and they shall go into the holes of the rocks into the caves of the earth from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His Majesty when He arises to shake the land or earth mightily in that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold which they made each for himself to worship to the moles and the bats which simply means they're going to throw them in caves that's where moles and bats are in holes in the ground they're going to try to put them out of sight in the dark places where moles and bats hide that's where they're going to put their idols where people can't see them go into the clefts of the rocks into the crags of the rugged rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His Majesty when He arises to shake the earth mightily the idea here is that when people realize that God is judging them for their idolatry they'll hide their idols and they themselves will go into the caves they'll be ashamed of their idols because it's bringing such disaster upon them it doesn't mean necessarily that they are actually repentant but rather they have found that their idols are inconvenient to keep around because of the judgment that's upon them sever yourselves from such a man whose breath is in his nostrils of what account is he now what's that about it's probable that it's referring to the Assyrians humans whom some in Judah were trusting in to deliver them at one point from the Assyrian Ephraimite conspiracy against Judah or possibly those who were trusting in Egypt Isaiah's message at a time when some were counseling that Egypt should be sought as an ally to help them against Assyria and others were saying Assyria should be sought as an ally to help them against the Syro-Israelite confederacy against them in every case people were looking to man they were looking to Assyria they're looking to Egypt they're looking to some human protection to get them out of their crisis and Isaiah's message consistently

was to both parties don't trust in Assyria don't trust in Egypt trust in God and it's sort of a statement of that message where he says separate yourself from Assyria or Egypt or whoever the man may be whoever the human agency may be these are mortals their breath is in their nostrils they're just breathing mortals God can take their breath away you know what account is man the point he's making is you should be trusting in God not man man can't do anything for you or if he can it's only temporary so you should be looking to God and forgetting about your trust in human alliances all right we need to take a break here and of course we haven't gotten very far yet but we will move a little more quickly when we come to passages that can justify it more I also have to get up some speed just so I can get on a roll more and get through more chapters in a single session but always a little slow beginning especially as we come to repetitious things later on that we don't have to comment as much on on