

BEHOLD MY SERVANT
A MESSIANIC STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOK OF ISAIAH
CHAPTERS 1 to 6

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There are about as many suggested outlines of the book of Isaiah as there are commentators and scholars who have written a study or commentary on Isaiah. The outline stated below is provided, not to improve upon existing outlines, but as a guide for this study and as a quick snapshot of the content of this section of Isaiah's prophecy.

A. The Sinful Nation: Chapters 1-5

1. The Lord's Charge Against the Nation: Chapter 1
2. Messiah's Kingdom in the Last Days: Chapter 2:1-4
3. Sin Revealed and Judgment Declared: 2:5-4:1
4. Messiah, the Branch and His Kingdom: 4:2-6
5. Parable of the Vineyard: 5:1-7
6. Woes on the Wicked 5:8-30

B. Isaiah's Vision of the Lord: Chapter 6

1. The Contrition of the Prophet: 6:1-7
2. The Commissioning of the Prophet: 6:8-13

A. Introduction to Chapters 1-6

Chapters 1 to 6 can be understood as an introduction to the entire prophetic book of Isaiah. To better understand these introductory chapters, they are divided in this study into two greater sections: Chapters 1-5 entitled: "The Sinful Nation" and Chapter 6 entitled: "Isaiah's Vision of the Lord". Each of these greater sections are further sub-divided into passages that seem to best reflect the thought of the prophet as he wrote about the sinful state of the nation of Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem. A majority of the content of these chapters are the Words of God given to Isaiah that expresses God's indignation with His sinful people and remarkably, His wonderful offer of mercy and grace to restore them if they would only repent of their sins and turn to Him in faith and obedience. In many instances, this restoration would be in the far future, during the coming Messianic kingdom, which is still future in our day.

To understand God's (and Isaiah's) perspective on the sinfulness of the chosen people, it is important to grasp the full impact of what it meant for God and the Jews to function within the most unique relationship ever imagined.

First, for His own purposes and plans for His creation, God chose a people to have a unique relationship with Himself. God chose them, not because this people were more numerous than any others on the earth, or had made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of the earth's peoples, or because they were worthy in any way of God's special attention, but His choice began with **one man**. This man Abram who lived, not in what became known as the land of Israel but, within a pagan culture in Ur of the Chaldeans and later in Haran (Genesis 11:31) far from the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. God had called Abram to leave his people and his father's household to settle in a land of God's choice (Genesis 12:1). God had preserved the lineage of Abraham, through Noah and going as far back as Adam. There should be no doubt that when God created Adam and Eve, He knew that they would eventually become parents to His chosen **man** who would become the father of His chosen people and **through whom, God would bless the nations through Abram's (later Abraham's) greater seed, the One who is the Messiah.**

Second, God revealed some of the reasons why He chose Abraham and his descendants to be His people. Through the prayer of king David, one of these reasons is described: "*What other nation on the earth is like your people Israel? Is there another nation whom God redeemed as a people for himself, to make a name for himself, by performing great wonders and awesome deeds and by driving out nations and gods for those whom you redeemed from Egypt? You established your people Israel to be your people forever, and you, O LORD, became their God.*" (2 Samuel 7:23-24). The core reason God chose this particular people was to "**make a name for Himself.**"

Moses earlier had observed: "*The LORD did not set his love on you or choose you because you were more numerous than any other people, for you were the fewest of all peoples. Rather it was because the LORD loved you and was keeping the oath he promised to your forefathers when the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of slavery from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8) See also Deuteronomy 33:26-29. Also, the prophet Samuel explained: "*For the LORD will not abandon his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you his very own people.*" (1 Samuel 12:22). Isaiah declared that God performed the miracle of dividing the waters of the Red Sea "*to gain for Himself everlasting renown.*" (Isaiah 63:12). God, through the prophet Ezekiel declared: "*Therefore, tell the house of Israel, 'This is what the sovereign LORD says: I did not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name.... I will sanctify my great name....then the nations will know that I am the LORD, says the sovereign LORD, when I am sanctified in you right before their eyes.....It is not for your sake that I am doing it.'*" (Excerpts from Ezekiel 36: 22-38). See also Jeremiah 32:20-21.

Third, what advantage was it to be God's chosen people? The Apostle Paul lists nine advantages: "*Who are Israelites. To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from whom Christ came according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*" (Romans 9:4-5). A brief explanation of these advantages will help in gleaning Paul's meaning.

- (1) Israelites: God's chosen people, to whom God chose have a unique relationship among all peoples of the earth.
- (2) Adoption: God chose them to be adopted as His children, to become members of His family and for whom, they would have a Father, who would love and protect them.
- (3) Glory: The Israelites were recipients of the divine shekinah glory which was evidenced in visible clouds by day and night during their wilderness wanderings and at other times and will again be seen in the messianic kingdom (Isaiah 4:5).
- (4) Covenants: The unique relationship between God and the Jews had a legal framework in the form of covenants He initiated. All but one of the covenants were unconditional. There are seven covenants: *first: Adamic* (or Edenic): promise of a savior who will defeat Satan: Genesis 3:15; *second: Noahic*: promise to not destroy the world again by water: Genesis 8:20-22 and 9:8-17; *third: Abrahamic*: God's promise to make from Abraham a great nation, to bless him and give him a great name, to bless all the peoples of the earth through him, to give him a land, to have kings proceed from him, to be his God and the God of his descendants and to establish this covenant through the child of promise, Isaac. Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:1-21; 26:2-5 and 28:10-17; *fourth: Mosaic* (Law): God dictated to Moses, an extensive code which governed the Israelites worship and social relationships. There is no other written code from God given to any other people except Israel in all the earth. Exodus chapter 20: the ten commandments (known as ten words), and the complete Pentateuch: Genesis to Deuteronomy; *fifth: Land*: God promised to restore to the land, that their fathers possessed, to the Israelites that have been scattered to all nations because of their unbelief. God also promised to renew their heart, and prosper them in the land. Deuteronomy 30: 1-10; *sixth: Davidic*: to king David, God made a promise to establish an everlasting kingdom ruled by a descendant of David who will rule on David's throne, forever. 2 Samuel 7:8-17; *seventh: New Covenant*: God promised uniquely and specifically to His chosen people that He would establish a new covenant in which God will put His law within them which will be written on their hearts. He will be their God and they will be His people. All of them will know Him and He will forgive their sins and will not remember these sins. The New Testament reveals that this new covenant will be fulfilled in the coming messianic kingdom. Ezekiel 31:31-37.

Note: Some also recognize a "**Priestly Covenant**" which is described in Numbers 25:10-13. This covenant was described as a "covenant of peace" in which God promised a covenant of a perpetual priesthood. This was a covenant God made with Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron. As it is considered a perpetual covenant, the priestly ministry in Aaron's line (through Phinehas) will last into the Messianic kingdom.

The Mosaic covenant was conditional upon the obedience of the Israelites to God's prescribed written code. Some may argue that the land covenant was also conditional but as understood in the new covenant, it is God who will create a new heart in His people (the faithful remnant) so that they will trust in Him and love Him with all their hearts and God will restore the land to them. It is God's intended purpose to fulfil all these wonderful promises made through His covenants with His people. It is very important to understand that He is a covenant keeping God and it is the covenants that define God's relationship with His people.

- (5) Giving of the Law: God, through Moses, gave written requirements that governed the worship and social life of the Israelites. No other people in all of history had such a unique and specific written code dictated from God.
- (6) Temple Worship: God graciously allowed the Israelites to have a temple in which so many of the objects and furniture contained in it pointed to the coming to the ministry of the coming Messiah. The temple was originally filled with the glory of God who blessed it with His presence specifically over the "mercy seat," the covering of the Ark of the Covenant (known also the Ark of the testimony). In the days of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, He called the temple, *His House*, Matthew 21:13 (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:45) quoting from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11.
- (7) The Promises: This is a vast advantage for the Jew. Contained within the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh: or TNK: Torah (the law); Nebi'im (the prophets); and Kethubim (the writings); were many hundreds of promises relating to their Messiah. Some of these promises were fulfilled absolutely accurately during the first coming of the Messiah and the others will be fulfilled just as accurately upon the second advent of the Messiah to establish His kingdom on the earth and during the eternal state.
- (8) The Patriarchs: The Jews were rightly proud of their lineage which originated with "their" father Abraham and included Isaac and Jacob. It was Jacob whom God changed his name to Israel and Jacob's sons became the "fathers" of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Scriptures reveal however, that the true sons of Abraham are those who believe in the Messiah, who is now in heaven and will return again.
- (9) The line of Christ: **Jesus the Messiah was born a Jew** and this point Paul leaves to the last as it is the most significant. The Israelites have a most blessed family member in their Messiah. The world should take notice of this for any who would disparage the Jews are bringing shame to the entire family of Jews including the Messiah, Jesus Christ whom Paul affirms is "*God over all, blessed forever, Amen*". (Romans 9:5). The greatest advantage of being a Jew is that the Savior of the world, their blessed Messiah belongs to them as a family member. The Jews, not only can boast in this but must trust in their "family" Messiah for their salvation, for: "*There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given among humans, by which we must be saved.*" Acts 4:12

Introduction to Chapter 1: The Lord's Charge Against the Nation

In one sense the first chapter of Isaiah could be entitled “Salvation in the Manger.” Following the introduction of the Prophet and the time frame he prophesied, the chapter opens with an indictment against His people from the Lord before a heavenly and earthly audience that even animals in a manger know their master yet His people do not know Him and have revolted against Him. In this context, the chapter progresses to a listing of the sins of the nation and then a most remarkable proclamation: These same sins, now like scarlet will be white as snow and though these sins are red like crimson they shall be like wool. The sins of the people are like scarlet and red like crimson because of the nature of their sins. The end of verse 15 states: “your hands are covered with blood.” The Lord requires repentance in verses 16 and 17 so that the people can have a right relationship with the Him and so that they can again “eat the best of the land”, verse 19. It may not be coincidence that Isaiah opens with the theme of salvation in the manger just as the New Testament opens with the same theme. The salvation offered in chapter 1 of Isaiah will later be revealed to be made possible to the people of Israel through the crushing of the promised Suffering Servant who will have the sins of the people fall on Him.

In the second section of chapter 1, verses 21 to 31, Isaiah reveals how the Lord will deal with the sinful people of Jerusalem and after the purge of the evil doers, the Lord will restore the city so that it will be called, “*the City of Righteousness*” (verse 26). The chapter ends with a common judgment of evil throughout the Scriptures. Transgressors and sinners will “*both burn together, with no one able to extinguish the fire*” (verse 31).

Esteemed Messianic Jewish scholar, Victor Buksbazen has provided these general comments to this chapter:

“The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw.” In Hebrew the words “*haza*” – to see, and “*hazon*” vision, are expressions which describe spiritual perception. The root is a technical term which refers to a revelation imparted by God to His chosen servants, the prophets. Therefore in our text “the vision of Isaiah” means the revelation which God vouchsafed to the prophet Isaiah. Its meaning is similar to the expression in Revelation 1:1 “The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him (John). . . .”

“Concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” As a native of Jerusalem and citizen of Judah, Isaiah’s prophecies are directed primarily to his own native land Judah and its spiritual and political capital Jerusalem. Looking out from the lofty position of the Holy City, Isaiah perceived the destiny of Judah and of her sister state Samaria.

However, Isaiah’s vision ranged far beyond the borders of the two states of Judah and Israel and included all mankind as seen from the standpoint of God’s eternal purpose and of His future Kingdom. Nevertheless Israel’s ultimate destiny was always in the center of Isaiah’s vision. He saw the restoration and redemption of Israel as having redemptive significance for all nations.

This is why Isaiah is important, not only for Israel or the generation of the prophet, but for all nations and all times.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, pages 96-97).

1-9 Rebellion Revealed

1:1 *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

Isaiah opens his book of prophecy with an introduction of himself and the historical scope of his prophetic ministry. He states that his father's name was Amoz. One scholar notes that, "According to Jewish tradition, Isaiah's father was the brother of King Amaziah, making Isaiah a member of the royal Davidic family." (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1, page 99). Names have a very significant place in this prophecy. The name Isaiah has the meaning of "The Lord is salvation". Two sons of Isaiah are mentioned, Shear-jashub meaning "a remnant shall return" and Maher-shalal-hash-baz meaning "hasten to the spoil, hurrying to the prey." Isaiah states the significance of himself and his sons to Israel: "*Look, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and harbingers in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion*". (Isaiah 8:18).

The entire prophecy of the book of Isaiah can be understood by Isaiah's introduction of the word "vision" which is the Hebrew *hazon*. Isaiah also uses the word vision in 21:1; 22:1, 5; 29:7 and 11. A similar word, "oracle", Hebrew: *massa*, is used by Isaiah in 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6 and has the meaning of "burden" or "utterance". Isaiah often introduces a distinct prophetic message from God with either the words vision or oracle.

The historical timeline of Isaiah's prophetic ministry is introduced in vs. 1. His prophecies are about Judah and Jerusalem (and often their relationships with the surrounding nations) and the vision Isaiah saw occurred during the reigns of Uzziah: (in the year of his death in 740 B.C.); Jotham: (750-731 B.C. Jotham co-reigned with Uzziah for about 10 years); Ahaz: (735-715 B.C. Ahaz co-reigned with Jotham for about 4 years); and Hezekiah: (715-686 B.C.). A Jewish tradition suggests that Isaiah was martyred during the reign of King Manasseh. A possible reference to the way Isaiah was killed (sawn in two) is mentioned in Hebrews 11:37.

1:2 *Listen, O heavens, hear, O earth,
for the LORD has spoken:
"I have reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.*

Isaiah begins his vision with a call from God for the universe (heavens and earth) to listen to His words. God wants the entire cosmos to know about His rebellious children (sons) whom He has reared, Hebrew *gadal* with the meaning to bring up to become great. God is referring to His chosen people who are the children of Israel being the descendants of Abraham. Genesis 12:2; 18:18-19. Refer to Romans 4:11, 16 and Galatians 3:6-8 and 29 for the application of God's intention to bless all those who have faith in Him and their connection to Abraham. Compare also Genesis 22:18. Isaiah in 19:24-25 and 42:6 speaks about the role of the God's people whom He has called to be a blessing and a light to the nations.

The rebellion (Hebrew: *pasha*) of God's people included their sins against God, listed in detail in chapter 1 and their refusal to be witness to the nations on God's behalf. The "Song of Moses", Deuteronomy 32:1-43, has a similar lament about the children of Israel's rebellion against God. In Isaiah *pasha* occurs 8 times: rebelled: 1:2; rebellious: 1:28; rebelled: 43:27; rebels: 46:8; rebel: 48:8; transgressors: 53:12 (twice); and rebelling: 59:13. Isaiah 53:12 is very significant as Isaiah prophecies about the Messiah: "*Therefore I will assign him a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*" Even though the Jewish religious leaders and the Romans counted or numbered the Messiah with the transgressors (by hanging on a cross with convicted thieves hanging on either side of Him), the love and mercy of the Messiah was such that He made intercession for those many whose sins He bore. There is both a past sense and present sense to His ministry of intercession. See notes on Isaiah 53:12.

1:3 *The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's feeding trough,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not consider.*

God compares His rebellious children with animals who know their master and the manger of the master. God's sons (His people) have no understanding of Him or His blessings. God's lament could be likened to children who have been raised in a home full of love and nurturing who have walked away and have forgotten both their parents and their home life. These children are estranged from their parental care and treat their past lives as if it did not exist. The use of irony by Isaiah, suggesting dumb animals know more than the children of Israel, is a strong statement about the woeful spiritual condition of the people of Judah. A confession of the sins of the people of God is recorded by Isaiah in 59:9-15a following another listing of their sins by God in 59:1-8.

It is certainly not coincidence that in the same context of God's description of His people as not knowing Him as their master in contrast to an ox and donkey who know both their master and their master's feeding trough (manger), that an offer of salvation is made to these ignorant people. Those who contemplate the mysteries of God and consider the birth place of the Messiah who is the savior of the world, would not miss the connection with Isaiah 1:3 and 1:18. The Messiah was born in the very place where an ox and a donkey would take refuge from the weather and where they would be fed by their master. The fact that the world's Savior was born in a manger should have directed many to consider the offer of salvation recorded in the eighteenth verse of Isaiah chapter 1.

1:4 *O sinful nation,
 a people loaded down with iniquity,
 an offspring of evildoers,
 children who act corruptly!
 They have forsaken the LORD;
 they have despised the Holy One of Israel;
 they have turned their backs on him.*

The word “O” (ah, alas) may also be understood as “woe” depicting judgment. Thus, if understood as a judgement term, it acts as an introduction to the description of the sins of the people in this verse and those which follow. God diagnosed the spiritual state of His chosen people and describes them with many words depicting their evil and rebellious nature. The *first* adjective describing God’s people, stated in vs. 4, is **sinful**, which is the Hebrew word *chata* which has the meaning of missing the mark, The mark of being holy which God has declared (Leviticus 11:44-45) was missed but they did not miss the mark of being sinful. The word *chata* occurs six times in Isaiah: sinful: 1:4; convict: 29:21; sinned: 42:24; 43:27 and 64:5; and the phrase: who does not live out their full days: 65:20. The KJV for 65:20 states “*but the sinner (being) an hundred years old shall be accursed.*” See notes on Isaiah 65:20.

The *second* descriptive term (vs. 4) is “**loaded down with iniquity**”. Iniquity is the Hebrew word *avon* which has the meaning of both guilt and sinfulness. It is the word Isaiah used in Isaiah 53:6: “*the LORD has laid on him, the sin of us all.*” Other occurrences of *avon* in Isaiah: iniquity: 5:18; 6:7; 13:11; 22:14; 27:9; 30:13; 40:2; 59:3; and 64:9; iniquities: 53:5; 59:2; 59:12; and 64:7; sin: 26:21; and 33:24; sins: 14:21; 50:1; 53:11; 64:6 and 65:7 (twice). In the KJV and NASB *avon* is translated as iniquity, and in the NIV it is translated as sinful. It is not translated in the DASV.

The *third* descriptive term (vs. 4) is “**offspring of evildoers**” Evildoers is the Hebrew word *ra’ a* which has the meaning in the Old Testament of breaking up, ruin, spoil, calamity or wicked. Several English words are used as translations of *ra’ a* in Isaiah: 1:16: evil; 8:9: be broken; 9:17: evildoer; 11:9: will not hurt; 14:20: evildoers; 24:19: broken up; 31:2: evildoers; 41:23: do evil; 59:15: displeased; and 65:25: not hurt. An often-misunderstood usage in Isaiah of a related word *ra* (evil) is recorded in 45:7: “*I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create calamity.*” The word “calamity” can be translated as evil (*ra*) but in the context of 45:7 it may be better to translate it as “disaster” in contrast to the word “peace” in the same sentence.

The *fourth* descriptive term (vs. 4) is “**children who act corruptly.**” Not only are they descendants of evil doers but they themselves continue in the same evil behavior. The English word “corruptly” is the Hebrew *shachath* and has the meaning of “to go to ruin” or “destroy”. In Isaiah, it is most often translated as destroy. Other occurrences of *shachath* are found in: 11:9: destroy; 14:20: destroyed; 36:10 destroy (twice); 37:12 delivered; 51:13: destroy; 54:16: destroyer; 65:8: destroy (twice); and 65:25 destroy.

The *fifth* descriptive term (vs. 4) is “**abandoned the LORD.**” Abandoned is the Hebrew word *azab* and has the meaning in the Old Testament of forsaken also: forsake, forsakes, forsaking, forsook (123 times in the O.T.); leave, leaves, leaving, left (56 times) and abandon, abandons, abandoned (15 times in the O.T.) and other words such as loose, neglect, free, failed and deserted. In Isaiah *azab* translated as: 1:4: abandoned; 1:28: forsake; 7:16: deserted (NASB: forsaken); 10:3: leave; 10:14: abandoned; 17:2: forsaken; 17:9: abandoned; 18:6: left; 27:10: forsaken; 32:14: deserted (or: forsaken); 41:17: abandon; 42:16: forsake; 49:14: forsaken; 54:7: abandoned; 55:7: forsake; 58:2: rejected (or: forsaken); 62:12: forsaken; and 65:11: forsake. A related Hebrew word *natah* (to forsake, leave, abandon) which can be translated as “abandoned” is translated in the DSAV as rejected in Isaiah 2:6 and as forsaken in 32:14.

The *sixth* descriptive term (vs. 4) is “**despised the Holy One of Israel.**” The English words despise(s) and despised in Isaiah translates a few Hebrew words. The word “despised in 1:4 is the Hebrew word *naats* (to spurn, treat with contempt, to blaspheme) also occurs in 5:24 as “despised” in 52:5 as blasphemed; and in 60:14 as “despised”. *Other Hebrew words:* In 16:14, the DSAV translates *qalah* (dishonored, lightly esteemed) as “despised.” The Hebrew word *qalah* (cursed, contempt) can be translated as “despise” in 23:9, is translated in the DSAV as “bring to shame.” The Hebrew word *maas* (to reject and to cast off) is translated as “despise” in 30:12, as “despised” in 33:8 and as “despises” in 33:15. The Hebrew word *bazah* (despise, disdain, contempt) is translated in the DSAV as “despises” in 37:22 and as “despised” in 53:3 (twice), Finally, the Hebrew word is *bazoh* (scorned) is translated as “despised” in 49:7.

From the various usages in Isaiah of these Hebrew words to describe “despised” the student can ascertain its primary meaning of to reject, treat with contempt and to spurn “the Holy One of Israel.” It is a scathing indictment against the people of God who have known Him as their creator, Lord, provider, the mighty One, caregiver and many other descriptive terms yet have without shame, rejected Him and treated Him with contempt.

Isaiah’s name for God in 1:4, “**the Holy One of Israel**” is a most revered and sacred descriptive title for the nation’s sovereign Lord and one of Isaiah’s favorite names of God. This sacred name both exalts the Lord as a being who is: absolutely holy, totally-other, transcendent and unlike any other being in all creation **and** is a stunning contrast to the sinfulness of His chosen people. Not only have the people of God defiled themselves in sin but what is far worse, they have “*turned their backs on Him,*” by returning to the vile worship of pagan idols. They have rejected and treated with scorn the very One who loved them and among all other peoples of the world, chose them to be His unique covenant people, to whom He desires to have an eternal relationship and from whom, His beloved, unique Son would be born to become their Messiah.

The sacred name for God, the *Holy One of Israel*, occurs several times in Isaiah and is often coupled with other beautiful names for Israel’s Creator and Redeemer. In Isaiah see: 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14. This name occurs only 6 times in the rest of the OT: 2Ki 19:22; Pss 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer 50:29; 51:5. Isaiah also uses “Holy One” as a title 4 times: 10:17; 40:25; 43:15; 49:7; and “Holy One of Jacob” once: 29:23.

The *seventh* descriptive term (vs. 4) is “**turned their backs on Him.**” The words “*turned their backs*” is the translation of the Hebrew word *zur* which has the meaning of “to be a stranger, or foreigner. This Hebrew word in the Old Testament is also translated as estranged, alien, an adulteress and a few other words. It is only translated in the O.T. as “turned their backs” (or turned away) in Isaiah 1:4. In other verses in Isaiah the DSAV translates *zur* as: 1:7: foreigners (twice); 17:10: foreign; 25:2: strangers; 25:5: foreigners; 28:21: unusual; 29:5: foes; 43:12: foreign; and 61:5 foreigners.

The *eighth* descriptive term describing the spiritual condition of the people of God (vs. 5a) is “**rebel**”. It is the translation of the Hebrew word *sarah* which has the meaning of defection, revolt and turning aside. Sarah also occurs in Isaiah in 31:6: rebelled and 59:13: rebelling. Isaiah uses many other Hebrew words to describe rebellion including *pasha* to denote rebellion (see notes on 1:2 above). Isaiah uses *marah* (rebel, rebellious, defying) in 1:20; 3:8; 50:5 and 63:10. *Sarah* (rebellious, stubborn) is used in 1:23, 30:1 and 65:2 to describe the word rebellious. In 30:9, the prophet uses the Hebrew word *meri* and the word *marad* in 36:5 to describe the word rebellious. Isaiah also uses *pasha*, usually translated as transgression, but the DASV translates the word in 53:8 as “rebellion” and in 57:4 and 59:20 as “sin.”

Results of their sins: 1:5-9

⁵ *Why should you be beaten anymore?*

Why do you just rebel more and more?

*The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.*

⁶ *From the sole of the foot to the top of the head
there is nowhere that is undamaged in it.*

*There are wounds, welts, and open sores;
they have not been cleansed,
or bandaged up,
or softened with olive oil.*

⁷ *Your country is desolate;*

*your cities are burned with fire;
foreigners are devouring your land right in front of you,
and it is desolate, as when overthrown by foreigners.*

⁸ *The daughter of Zion is left like a hut in a vineyard,
like a watchman's shelter in a field of cucumbers,
like a besieged city.*

⁹ *Unless the LORD of hosts had left us a few survivors,
we would have been like Sodom,
we would have become like Gomorrah.*

1:5-9: The Lord turns from addressing the heavens and the earth (verses 2-4) and directs His attention to His people. He states that there is no place remaining within their physical bodies that does bear the consequences of their sin. The immediate consequences come from the invasion of their land. The invasion of Judah and capture of most of its towns and cities is best understood as the campaign of the Assyrians under Sennacherib whom Isaiah later describes in detail (chapters 36-37). Because of the Assyrian invasion, the people are physically suffering, verses 5-6; and their land is desolate and their crops have been devoured, verses 7-9. The prophet directly warned the people of Judah about the Assyrians, Isaiah 10:1-11, who would trample their land as a judgment from the Lord and destroy their idols just as God, through the Assyrians, had done to Samaria, 10:11. In **verses 5-6** the Lord rhetorically asks: *Why should you be beaten anymore?*

Victor Buksbazen notes on this question:

“Many ancient and modern translators have rendered this passage in a similar fashion. However the Hebrew word “*al-me*” is best translated “upon which place” or “where else,” because Isaiah views the whole nation as one body. “Why” would have been more naturally expressed in Hebrew with the word “*Lamah*,” as in Isaiah 1:11.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 102).

The Lord states that no part of their physical bodies is left unscathed as a result of their rebellion against Him. Because of the desolation of their land, **verses 7-9**, in which their cities had been burned with fire and the (produce of their) fields have been devoured by strangers (the invading Assyrians), the people of Judah are suffering from hunger and its accompanying harm to their bodies.

The armed campaign by the Assyrians have also left them unprotected and open to abuse and death just as an unprotected shelter in a vineyard or vegetable (cucumber) garden during an invasion. The descriptive term, “*daughter of Zion*”, **vs. 8** is a common reference by Isaiah to God’s beloved people of Jerusalem who are in need of His protective care. See also 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; and 62:11.

In vs. 9, Isaiah describes God’s merciful provision for His people. In spite of the scorn the people had for God in rejecting Him as their Sovereign Lord and gracious care giver, the Lord remembers His unconditional covenant with them and will preserve to Himself a **faithful remnant** so that His promise to Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:1-21; and to Isaac, Genesis 26:2-5; and to Jacob, Genesis 28:10-17, will be fulfilled. For a detailed study on the remnant of Israel, refer to Ariel Ministries’ Study MBS191: *The Remnant of Israel: Past, Present and Future*, by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. Other references in Isaiah to this remnant include: 1:27 (repentant ones); 4:1-2; 7:3 (Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub meaning: “*a remnant will return*”); 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:31-32; 46:3 and 66:19. God’s verdict upon them is condemnation for they would have been left just like Sodom and Gomorrah (also vs. 10) if He had not intervened and mercifully granted that a few survivors would be left to proclaim His glorious name and be a light for Him to the nations. For the story of Sodom and Gomorrah see Genesis 18:16-19:29. The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Romans 9:29.

Other Biblical references to the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah also include: Deuteronomy 29:23; 32:32; Isaiah 1:9-10; 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 10:15; 2 Peter 2:6 and Jude vs. 7.

Also, in vs. 9, Isaiah introduces a significant title for God. Isaiah refers to God as “**LORD of hosts**”. This title refers to God as: LORD (YHWH) of armies, a conquering warrior who will never be defeated in whom the people of God can put their complete trust. Isaiah, in his prophecy, contrasts the trustworthy character of their God who is a mighty warrior to Judah’s rebellious trust in the surrounding nations who are powerless to help them. The divine name, “LORD of hosts” is recorded in Isaiah (DASV), 62 times: 1:9; 1:24; 2:12; 3:1; 3:15; 5:7, 9, 16, 24; 6:3, 5; 8:13, 18; 9:7, 13, 19; 10:16, 23, 24, 26, 33; 13:4, 13; 14:22, 23, 24, 27; 17:3; 18:7 (twice); 19:4, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25; 21:10; 22:5, 12, 14 (twice), 25; 23:9; 24:23; 25:6; 28:5, 22, 29; 29:6; 31:4, 5; 37:16, 32; 39:5; 44:6; 45:13; 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; and 54:5. This is a favorite term for the Lord in Isaiah and the prophet also uses a related term: Lord GOD of hosts which uses two significant titles for God: Lord (Hebrew *Adonay* with the primary meaning of Sovereign) and GOD (Hebrew *YHWH* often transliterated as Yahweh which has the primary meaning of “I am who I am –Exodus 3:14).

Excellent resources for the study of the names of God are Theological Studies such as: *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical*, by Robert Duncan Culver, Christian Focus Publications, Ltd. Great Britain, 2005; and *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*, by Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Press, Chicago, 1999.

10-15 Worthless Worship Condemned

¹⁰ *Listen to the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom;
hear the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.*

¹¹ *"What do your many sacrifices mean to me?" says the LORD.*

*"I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams,
and the fat of well fed cattle;*

I delight not in the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats.

¹² *When you come to appear before me,
who has required this from your hand,
this trampling of my courts?*

¹³ *Do not bring any more worthless offerings;
your incense is detestable to me.*

*New moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies,
-- I cannot stand such sinful assemblies.*

¹⁴ *Your new moons and your appointed feasts I hate;
they have become a burden to me;
I am tired of putting up with them.*

¹⁵ *When you spread out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you.
Yes, when you make many prayers,
I will not listen,
for your hands are full of blood.*

1:10: The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah emphatically calls His people to listen to His word. After describing their woeful condition brought about because of their evil rebellion against Him, God calls them rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah. This double reference (also vs. 9) to the cities He long ago obliterated because of loathsome sin is a startling warning to Judah that judgment not only has arrived due to the invasion of a foreign army but their plight could be far worse in that they could possibly suffer the same punishment as these cities of old.

1:11: God declares to His people that their rituals of worship described as sacrifices, burnt offerings of rams, the fat of cattle and the blood from bulls, lambs or goats, do not bring Him any pleasure for He has had enough of them. God is not casting aside the worship requirements of the law which He had prescribed for His people. He is however refusing to accept the worship of those who have committed the catalog of sins He has just denounced, verses 2-5. God's indictment of King Saul, after his disobedience (1 Samuel 15) is a similar incident where obedience to God is better than sacrificing to God. See 1 Samuel 15:22-23. God's judgment upon Saul was to reject him as king. Isaiah declared that God will judge the people of Judah and Jerusalem because of their detestable sins. God's judgment would result in the destruction of their nation and their removal from it (Isaiah 3:1-26; 5:1-30; 22:1-14).

1:12-14: God calls the attendance of worshipers at the temple a trampling of His courts for they are not welcome. Their offerings are called worthless and even the fragrant odor of incense, the unique recipe of the Lord's choosing, Exodus 30:34-38, is now an abomination to Him. Their observance of solemn assemblies, consecrated days, new moon festivals, appointed feasts and Sabbaths had become a burden for God to endure and recognize because of their evil hearts. God was not abolishing these observances that He had designed for them: (Exodus 12:14-20; 23:14-19; 29:10-30:38; 31:12-17; 34:18-26; Leviticus chapters 1-7 and 23-27; Numbers 9:1-14; 10:10; 28:1-29:40; Deuteronomy 16:1-17).

1:15: As a result of their evilness in worship, God declares that when they spread out their hands in prayer, and when they multiply their prayers, He will refuse to listen to them because their hands are covered in blood. Victor Buksbazu comments:

The usual stance of the Israelite at prayer was to spread forth his hands, palms upward. However when these praying hands were covered with blood, God could not hearken to their prayers, but only see innocent blood dripping from their palms. Their very display of piety with blood-stained hands, was itself blasphemy. By their "pious activities," they were unconsciously seeking to reduce Jehovah to the level of the deities of their pagan neighbors, who were as immoral and unconcerned about righteousness as their devotees. All these gods expected of their worshipers was bloody sacrifices and homage. Not so the God of Israel. He who would approach Him must do so with clean hands and a pure heart. (Victor Buksbazu, *Isaiah*, page 105).

16-20 Repentance Required and Redemption Realized

¹⁶ *Wash yourselves,
make yourselves clean;
put away the evil deeds from before my eyes;
stop doing evil.*

¹⁷ *Learn to do good.
Seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow."*

¹⁸ *"Come now, 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 like wool.*

¹⁹ *If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good of the land.*

²⁰ *But if you refuse and rebel,
you will be devoured with the sword,"
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.*

1:16-17: Having denounced the worship of the evil hearted who have blood dripping from their upraised hands in hypocritical prayer, God demands a change. God desires to keep His covenant relationship with His chosen nation. There is only one possible way for this to happen. The hearts of the people must be made clean. God starts the process with a list of demands for repentance that would have been rapidly and dramatically spoken by the prophet. There are three sets of three demands in verses 16-17. The first set (trio) of demands call for the cleansing and removal of evil. It is an internal activity in which impurity of heart is and willfulness is decidedly removed from their consciousness. It is an act of the will to no longer contemplate and consider wicked behavior. Thomas Constable depicts washing as indicative to repenting (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 20).

By "washing away" their sinfulness they can stand before God ready for the next set of commands. God demands that they cease their evil actions, learn good (acceptable to God) behavior and seek justice. These are external activities which are self-related. They have to do with personal actions that can only be realized after having an inward cleansing. The third set of demands (if obeyed) proves that internal and external changes have occurred in the repentant ones. God calls them to outward righteous actions in the community: reprove (correct) the ruthless, defend the orphan and plead for the widow.

James in his epistle pleads for the same actions to follow inward faith. The central teaching of James' letter is that works must accompany faith. Those who obey God's word by righteous actions will be blessed. James 1:27 states: *"Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."*

1:18: This is an often quoted and beloved verse by those who have put their trust in God. It is God's explanation of how He views the transformation of the penitent from acts of blood stained hands to a soul who has been washed and cleansed by the intervention of God. Later revelation by Isaiah, chapter 53, will explain how God accomplishes this intervention. God calls His people to listen to Him (come now) and hear His declaration (reason together). It was not a call for a conference of peers collaborating on a considered action. It was a gracious and caring demonstration of sacrificial love by God to His beloved people. Although they repeatedly spurned Him by rebellious deeds, He repeatedly reached out His arm to comfort them and offer His salvation. He did this at the greatest of all costs to Himself. God's intervening action to restore His people to godliness cost the life of His beloved Son who was put to death following excruciating suffering and abuse by the very people He came to rescue from an eternity of torment.

It wasn't as if this was a reactionary move by God following an unforeseen fall into sin by those whom He had created. God's provision of salvation with the crucified Son being mankind's kinsmen redeemer was planned in eternity past before the creation of the heavens and the earth. A careful study of Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 5:9-12; and 13:8 reveals God's eternal purpose in creation which is to have all creation praise Him for the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:6,12 and 14).

God describes their sins as being like scarlet and red like crimson (vs. 18), for their hands, (vs 15), were *"full of blood"*. By God's intervention their sins would be seen as white as snow and like wool. This was also the description of what David, in repentant and humble contrition following his rebuke by the prophet Nathan, due to David's sin with Bathsheba, called God to perform in him as recorded in Psalm 51:7: *"Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."*

This verse and chapter 53 of Isaiah may have been on the mind of the Apostle Paul when he wrote to his young protégé, Timothy: *"But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and are convinced of, knowing from whom you learned them. And that from early childhood have known the Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* 2 Timothy 3:14-15. Hebrews chapter 11 discusses the faith of many Old Testament saints including Abraham. Also, Paul in Galatians 3:1-9 discusses the faith of Abraham as an example of how those who lived before Christ had faith. Paul, quoting Genesis 15:6, states in Galatians 3:6: *"Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness."*

So it is quite reasonable from the witness of Scripture to understand Isaiah 1:18 as a message from God explaining how someone who has been lost in their sins could have their lives transformed to be clean and righteous before Him.

David L. Cooper explains:

The mercy of the Lord shows forth in a luminous manner in the promise that the prophet made to Israel: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God is eager to blot out our sins. No matter how dark they may be, He is very eager to forgive them. But He must be just at the time that He justifies one. Because of this fundamental characteristic of the Divine Being--His holiness--He has provided an atonement for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If one's sins, which are as scarlet or as red as crimson, are to be washed and made white as wool, one must accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, bringing Him to God as his offering of atonement in the spirit of the song, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come." He who comes to Christ, the Lord will in nowise cast out. (D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-September 1943).

1:19-20: To have sins cleansed to be white as snow and as wool required an act of consent and obedience by the sinner. It is not that people must perform a work to earn their righteous standing before God. As stated above, Genesis 15:6 records the action of belief by Abraham by which God reckoned (put to his account) to him as righteousness. God in Isaiah 1:19 states the sinner must first consent to God's word regarding the transformation of the sinner from unrighteous to righteous. In vs. 19, the word "willing" (consent) is the Hebrew word *abah*, literally meaning to "breathe after" or "to acquiesce". It has a passive sense not having the same force as volition but when coupled with "obey" Hebrew: *shama* (hearing with the intent to obey), the meaning is clear that God intended the people to hear (listen to His word) and obey Him. By their obedience they demonstrate their faith in Him. Obedience is a consequence of their internal decision to listen to God. The reward for their obedience to God was that they would "eat the best of the land" implying God's protection and provision for them. The consequence of disobedience was that their land would be conquered and the people would be devoured (**eaten**) by the sword of their conquerors. God would send a powerful nation to destroy them. See also Deuteronomy 28:1-68 and 30:15-20.

21-31 Evil Removed and Righteousness Restored

1:21 *How the faithful city has become a whore!
She was once full of justice,
righteousness inhabited her,
but now only murderers.*

The Lord describes the woeful condition of His beloved city. The word "How" according to Victor Buksbazen, (*Isaiah*, page 108), sounds like a sigh in the Hebrew and it is the first word of the book of Lamentations. God is lamenting that the city, which was once a place of justice, has sunk so low as to be described as a harlot. The city which also was the residence for

righteousness was now the home for murderers. Victor Buksbazen also notes (ibid) that the Hebrew word for “murderers” is *merachetzim* having the meaning of “professional murderers” – killers for hire.

1:22 *Your silver has become dross,
your wine diluted with water.*

The Lord also described the city as a precious metal (silver) that has become diluted with pollution and therefore has lost its value and usefulness. The city was also likened to drink (fine wine or other fermented liquid) that had been diluted with water to cheapen it and make it unpalatable and worthless for its intended use. This description of the corruption of silver and wine is a metaphor for the rulers of Jerusalem (vs. 23), who have become so corrupt, as vs. 21 so jarringly avows, that the once faithful city has become a whore!

1:23 *Your princes are rebellious,
and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves bribes,
and chases after payoffs.
They refuse to defend the orphan,
and the widow's cause does not come before them.*

The Lord next describes the leaders of the city. They are rebels who love a bribe and who prefer the companionship of thieves to fellowship with their Creator. They prove they have not repented and have not removed their evil deeds from God’s sight for they have not, as required by God (vs. 17), defended the orphan nor have they plead (in court) for the widows. Their internal consciousness and will and their external behavior is thoroughly corrupt and without hope of restoration nor can they have a righteous relationship with God unless He takes drastic action to discipline them, by punitive action, and cleanse them. And this is exactly what God now states He will do for His people.

1:24 *Therefore the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
the Mighty One of Israel, says,
"I will take vengeance on my enemies,
and avenge myself on my foes.*

The Lord announces His intention to be relieved of His adversaries and He will avenge Himself of His foes. His intentions are introduced by His self-declarative titles. God describes Himself as “*the LORD of hosts*” (see study notes on vs. 9 above) and “*the Mighty One of Israel.*” This later name occurs only in this verse. The title “Mighty One of Jacob” occurs in Genesis 49:24; Psalm 132:2, 5; Isaiah 49:26 and 60:16. Both of the Isaiah references have the full title of: “your savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

These descriptive titles of the Lord are His announcement by sacred decree that He alone has the authority and ability to accomplish His will. He alone is the Lord of the universe who is absolutely free to do what he wants without any obstruction by those who would oppose Him. For God's opinion of His enemies see Psalm 2.

1:25 *I will turn my hand on you,
and skim off your dross,
and will remove all your impurities.*

God announces His intention to deal with the obstinate and sinful people of Jerusalem. The dross and dilution (that which pollutes the spiritual condition of His people) that God mentioned in vs. 22 would now be skimmed (smelted) away implying a cleansing purpose. The process of refining or smelting metal requires intense heat. As applied to God's people it would mean hardship and suffering. The fourth stanza of a beloved hymn, How Firm a Foundation, by an anonymous author speaks to this work of God:

“When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace all sufficient, shall be your supply;
the flame shall not hurt you; I only design
your dross to consume and your gold to refine.”

A thoughtful study on this hymn is given by David Powlison in chapter 7 of the book: *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*. John Piper, Justin Taylor, General Editors, Crossway Books, Wheaton, 2006. (See notes on Isaiah 41:10) The intent of this old hymn and more importantly of the word of God in vs. 25 is that God refines His beloved children so that they will be purified and prepared to undertake the work God has intended them to accomplish. For a more extended comment on this hymn see notes on Isaiah 41:10. Proverbs 3:11-12 (also quoted in Hebrews 12:5-6) describes a similar action of God for the purposes of correction and restoration.

1:26 *I will restore your judges as at the first,
and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you will be called,
'the City of Righteousness,'
'a Faithful Town.'*

Following the refining process, which will include suffering by His children, God will restore Jerusalem's judges and counselors (who by implication will be faithful to Him and treat fairly His people). The city will also be called “*the city of righteousness, a faithful city.*” This promise of restoration and revival of the spiritual leaders of Jerusalem is so typical of Isaiah's writing style. Consistently throughout his prophecy, Isaiah depicts judgment on the people of God from their holy and just Sovereign Lord, followed by a promise of a future kingdom where peace, justice and righteousness will exist and this kingdom will be ruled by the Messiah.

Thomas Constable explains:

God would subject His people to fires of adversity, but only to purify them, not destroy them. Just rulers would emerge and the city would once again enjoy a reputation for righteousness and faithfulness to God. This is the first allusion in Isaiah to a coming Judge who will establish justice and create righteous conditions, about whom the prophet revealed much more later. The restoration described here will find fulfillment in the millennial reign of Christ. (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 21).

1:27 *Zion will be redeemed with justice,
and her repentant ones with righteousness.*

The city of Jerusalem, often called Zion by Isaiah, will experience redemption by means of justice. This certainly is a reference to God's work of redemption through His Servant, the Messiah, whom Isaiah will later describe in 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11 and 52:13-53:12. This is God's word of redemption by God's appointed Redeemer who is the holy Judge who will administer righteous judgment. Redemption is a major theme in Isaiah. The word "redeemed" occurs thirteen times: 1:17; 29:22; 35:9; 43:1; 44:22, 23; 48:20; 51:10; 52:3, 9; 62:12; 63:4 and 9. The One who secures redemption, is called the "Redeemer" thirteen times in Isaiah: 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16 and 63:16. See notes on each of these verses for an expanded discussion.

The people of God's beloved city, Zion will experience redemption by the righteous work of their coming Messiah. These ones, the faithful remnant, are described in vs. 27 as "repentant ones". See comments on vs. 9. Zion, (Hebrew: *Tsiyyon*) first mentioned in vs. 8, is the beloved hill of God. It was one of the mountains in the land of Moriah to which God had directed Abraham to perform the test of sacrificing Isaac as described in Genesis 22. David later purchased this mountain, 2 Samuel 24:18-25 and the temple was built upon it by Solomon, 2 Chronicles 3:1. It was (and still is) a sacred place for the Lord and His people. Zion will have a very prominent place in the future messianic kingdom. See: Isaiah chapter 2:1-11; 4:1-6; 24:23; 35:10; 51:11; 59:20; Joel chapter 2; 3:18-21; Micah 4:1-13; and Zechariah 8:1-8.

²⁸*But the rebellious and sinners will be crushed,
and those who forsake the LORD will be consumed.*

In stark contrast to the redeemed people of God who were repentant and obeyed Him and had their future assured by their Redeemer, the Messiah to come, those who refused to repent and remained rebellious and sinful will be crushed together and will come to an end. They will have no glorious future with their God nor will they have any hope of restoration. For most of the people of Judah and Jerusalem who were the recipients of Isaiah's prophetic messages, this verse is a sad commentary on their lives. God had foretold Isaiah that his audience would have hard hearts, deaf ears and blind eyes, not just for a short time but until the land is "absolutely devastated," Isaiah 6:8-13.

Woven throughout his prophecy is Isaiah's many discussions on the judgment of God on those who have rebelled against Him and have scorned His loving care for them. In graphic detail, Isaiah describes the final end of these sinful people such as "crushed" and "consumed" in vs. 28, "burn" in vs. 31. Among a multitude of other depictions of the retribution God will enact on His people for despising Him, chapter 5:25, is a representative sample: *"Therefore the anger of the LORD burns against his people; he has stretched out his hand against them, and has struck them. The mountains tremble, and their corpses are strewn like garbage in the streets."* When studying Isaiah, one has to keep in mind that, even though God often talks of judgment, He also talks of comfort, salvation and of a future peaceable kingdom which will be ruled by His beloved Son, the Messiah to come.

²⁹ *For you will be ashamed of the sacred oaks
in which you delighted,
and you will be embarrassed for the gardens
that you have chosen.*

³⁰ *For you will be like an oak whose leaf withers,
and like a garden that has no water.*

³¹ *The strong will be like tinder,
and his work like a spark.
They will both burn together,
with no one able to extinguish the fire.*

One of the most detestable practices of the people of God in Judah was participating in pagan Canaanite fertility rites which included lewd and profane acts under the cover of trees (oaks or terebinth) and gardens specifically selected for these purposes. These rites included prostitution committed alongside Asherah poles and incense altars and the despicable action of sacrificing children to the pagan god Molech. They also ate pigs flesh which was cooked in broth that included many things that were an abomination to God. The Israelites were told by God to tear down the pagan altars, sacred pillars and the Asherim of the inhabitants of Canaan when they took possession of the promised land and to make no covenant with the pagan peoples of this land nor inter-marry with them, Exodus 34:12-17. See also Deuteronomy 12:2-4 and 16:21-22. However, the Israelites disobeyed God and began to worship Baal and his female consort, Asherah. This worship involved the carving of a wooden pole (called Asherah) and planting it in selected groves (gardens with oak and terebinth trees). In these groves, the hideous practices described above took place. Some leaders (Gideon) and kings (Hezekiah and Josiah) removed the Asherah poles. King Ahab, however had built an Asherah and worshipped Baal, 1Kings 16:29-33, and king Manasseh brought a carved image of Asherah into the temple, 2 Kings 21:2-9. A few additional references to this pagan worship include: Judges 3:7; 6:25-32; 1Kings 18:19; Isaiah 27:9; 57:3-13; 65:2-7; Jeremiah 17:1-4; Ezekiel 6:11-14 and Micah 5:13-14.

But, their devotion to pagan religious practices and their worship of false gods will be of no avail. These worthless deities will not comfort them or save them when the One true God brings upon them their destruction. This destruction will devour both the pagan idol and those who worship it.

Many depictions of judgment in Isaiah involves burning. See also: 4:4; 10:17; 26:11;34:9-10; and 66:24. This descriptive portrayal of their final doom is no more vividly displayed than in the very last verse of the prophecy of Isaiah in which the righteous ones will look upon the never-ending punishment of the wicked: *“They will go out, and look on the corpses of those who have rebelled against me; for their worms will not die, neither will their fire be extinguished. They will be abhorred by all humanity.”* Isaiah 66:24.

As is evident from a study of this first chapter, many of the issues introduced by Isaiah are discussed in greater detail as his prophecy proceeds to its final conclusion. Isaiah organized his writings into the format that has been preserved by God and placed in its prominent position in the Old Testament. Isaiah did not write haphazardly but compiled his writings in such a way as to present thematically and logically the vision he received from God. The remaining chapters (2-6) of the lengthy introduction to his prophetic writings also introduce issues that will be discussed in greater detail in later sections of his book.

Teaching Outline of Isaiah Chapter 1:

- 1-9 Rebellion Revealed
- 10-15 Worthless Worship Condemned
- 16-20 Repentance Required and Redemption Realized
- 21-31 Evil Removed and Righteousness Restored

Isaiah Chapters 2-4

This portion of Isaiah contains an indictment from the Lord on the wickedness of the nation’s rulers, its men, its women and inclusively all who have committed idolatry and have been influenced by other nations resulting in open rebellion against God. Specific verses from this section are prophetically linked to the time of tribulation as revealed in the book of Revelation. The wickedness of the human race and notably for the Jewish nation will not gradually turn to righteousness nor will mankind’s morals or ethics evolve from evil mindedness to purity over a long period of time. Just as Isaiah witnessed the iniquities practiced by the Jewish people during his life, so will the very angels of God witness the iniquities of mankind unfold unabated and unrepentant until the time of the great white throne judgment recorded in Revelation chapter 20.

Chapters 2-4 form a cohesive unit in which Isaiah speaks of the glories of the days when the Messiah will rule on the earth with Jerusalem as His capital. David L. Cooper comments:

THE SECOND recorded sermon of Isaiah appears as chapters 2, 3, and 4 of his book. These chapters must be studied as a whole. He began his sermon with a vision of Jerusalem as the capital of the earth during the Millennial Age and concluded it with a like vision recorded in chapter 4. Between these glimpses of glory, he spoke of the corrupt customs and manners which had been imported into the country from foreign, pagan lands. Then he foretold the terrific judgments of the great day of Jehovah when every high thing that is exalted against God will be brought low, and when God alone shall be exalted. This prediction is followed by a description of

the low spiritual, ethical, and moral tone of the people of Israel during the time of the Tribulation. We might compare the first and last visions of this sermon to mountain peaks and the material presented in the body of the sermon to the valley separating them. (D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly - October, 1943.)

The Kingdom of the Last Days: Chapter 2:1-4

The first four verses of chapter 2 of Isaiah provide a prophetic vision of the future kingdom of God in which the Lord Himself will be a judge over and a teacher to the nations. The vision concerns Judah and Jerusalem and the specific location called the mountain of the Lord. This kingdom will be peaceful where nations on earth will never again learn war or rise up against each other. The word and the law of the Lord will be dispensed on this mountain called Zion and all nations of the earth will “stream” to it (vs. 2).

There is no indication whatsoever that this is a parable or allegorical interlude within the prophecy of Isaiah. If Isaiah is to be understood clearly the words must be taken as they are stated. The vision concerns Judah and Jerusalem in the last days. So it is in the future from Isaiah’s time. The last days must mean a future time when nations never again will learn war. Even a cursory study of history will reveal that so far this has not taken place, so the last days must still be in the future in our time. So Isaiah is stating clearly that Judah, Jerusalem and Mount Zion will be inhabited and the Lord will be in residence and that there will be other nations on the earth whose citizens will go to Zion for teaching so they can walk in His paths.

There is also no indication from this passage or from any other passage in all of Scripture that these verses are a prophecy of a future church age. To render it so would be an indication that any passage in Isaiah or in the Old Testament cannot be taken at face value. To read “church” into this passage is purely allegorical speculation. What we can know for certain is that in the future, in the last days, the Lord Himself will be resident on Mount Zion in the City of Jerusalem in the nation of Judah. If the Lord is present, it will be as ruler of His kingdom. No other person would be suitable or worthy.

Micah 4:1-4 is a parallel passage to Isaiah 2:1-4. It may be that Micah incorporated the words of Isaiah into his prophecy or that he received the same message from the Holy Spirit. It is significant however that when the same words from God are proclaimed a second time, it cannot be ignored as just coincidence. Every word of God in the Scriptures has its purpose as Isaiah will later record: “*So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it*”. Isaiah 55:11

2:1 *The message that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

Isaiah begins another major declaration of prophetic truth with the words: “The word Isaiah, the son of Amoz saw.” He uses a similar phrase in 1:1 and 13:1. How Isaiah “saw” the word (2:1), vision (1:1), and oracle (13:1) from God is not revealed to us. It does however indicate that the prophet was allowed by God to “see” the future as if it had already happened. The Apostle John was given the same prophetic sight regarding the end times and his record of it is preserved for us in the last book of the Scriptures. The “message” Isaiah saw concerns the future glory for the people who are his main audience, those who will be the faithful residents of Judah and Jerusalem.

2:2 *In the latter days,
the mountain of the LORD's house will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and all nations will flow unto it.*

The message (word) or vision Isaiah saw, concerns the last days. This is a literal reference to the days that concern the “days” of second coming of the Lord. Victor Buksbazen observes:

“At the end of the days” or “in the last days,” in Hebrew “be-aharit ha-yamin,” is an expression which, as a rule, refers to the Messianic times. The word “eschatology” is derived from the Greek word “eschaton” – “the last,” which, in turn, is a translation of the above Hebrew phrase.

The end of the days is that period of time which closes human history. It is the era which inaugurates the Kingdom of God, when the Lord Himself will rule the nations, as well as the hearts and minds of men. It will be the realization of true theocracy, not the rule of priests or religious functionaries, but of God Himself. The end of times bridges time and eternity.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 114.)

David M Levy, in his commentary on the Prophet Joel comments:

Joel described this awesome day as the *day of the Lord* (Jehovah). The phrase *day of the Lord* is used some five times in Joel (1:15; 2:1; 2:11; 2:31; 3:14). Although it has reference to the local judgment God would bring on Judah through this plague, it speaks of a future day when God will intervene in judgment upon the world. For example, Joel 2:31 must be speaking of a future day of judgment, because the sun was not darkened, nor the moon turned into blood during Joel’s day. Again, Joel 3:14 does not speak of Joel’s day but a future day of judgment upon the enemies of Israel. The plague in Joel’s day was a prototype of an awesome *day of the Lord* yet future.

To understand what is meant by the *day of the Lord*, one must understand the difference between *man’s day* and the *Lord’s day*. There are four key days mentioned in Scripture. First is *man’s day*. This phrase is used in 1 Corinthians 4:3 in reference to “man’s judgment.” Paul said: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of *man’s judgment*” This “man’s judgment” is literally *man’s day*, having reference to the day which now is, when men have control over human government.

Second is the *day of Christ*, mentioned six times in Scripture (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). It refers to the time when Christ will come to rapture the Church (1 Th. 4:13–18) out of the earth, taking Christians to be with Him (Jn. 14:1–3) forever.

Third is the *day of the Lord*, which speaks of a dark gloomy day (2:1)—a time of judgment. The day of the Lord refers to the direct intervention of God in the affairs of man after the Rapture of the Church. It covers the Tribulation (Rev. 6–19), Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1–10), and the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11–15). It is not only a time of judgment on the wicked, but a time of great blessing for the redeemed of Israel and the Church.

Fourth is the *day of God*, mentioned in 2 Peter 3:12, which has reference to the heavens passing away, the elements melting, the earth being renovated by fire, and the establishment of a new heaven and earth, ushering in the eternal state. (Notes on Joel 1:15 by David M Levy, *Joel: The Day of the Lord: A Chronology of Israel's Prophetic History*, Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1987, Logos Edition).

The *first* important detail Isaiah mentions about these latter (last) days regards the mountain upon which the house of the Lord will reside. This mountain, Zion will be, at that time, the “highest” (Hebrew: rosh), meaning “head” “top” or “first”. The word occurs 598 times in the O.T. and is translated as “head” 349 times, as “chief” 91 times and as “top” 73 times. The *second* detail about this mountain is that it will be “*exalted above the hills*” giving it the most esteemed status among all the mountains and hills of the earth. One possible understanding of this mountain that is exalted (raised) above the hills is that, due to the cataclysm described in Revelation 16:17-21 near the end of the great tribulation, all other mountains and hills have been leveled and according to Isaiah 2:2, it is Zion alone which will be raised and be the exalted mountain of God. Another possibility is that due to its exalted and majestic ruler who resides upon it, Zion is described as the chief of mountains and raised above the hills. See also, Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1, page 129.

Thomas Constable adds:

The term "mountain" is sometimes a symbol of a kingdom, nation, authority, or rule elsewhere in the prophetic writings (e.g., Dan. 2:35, 44- 45; Amos 4:1; Rev. 17:9-11). The ancients also regarded mountains as the homes of the gods. If Isaiah was using "mountain" as a figure of speech, he meant that Israel and her God would be the most highly exalted in the earth eventually. This will be the case during Messiah's earthly reign. The reference to "the mountain of the house of Yahweh" (v. 2), however, may indicate that the prophet had a more literal meaning in mind. He may have meant that the actual mountain on which the temple stood would be thrust higher in elevation. This may happen (cf. Ezek. 40:2; Zech. 14:4, 10), but the primary implication seems to be that Israel and Yahweh will be exalted in the world. (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 23).

The God who lives on this mountain will have the greatest supremacy over any other so-called gods or pagan deities. In fact, there will truly be no comparison among the world's deities as there is only one true God as Isaiah so emphatically declares: Isaiah 43:10; 44:8; 45:5, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9. In the ancient world, mythical pagan deities were said to have resided on high mountains.

Isaiah dispels any doubts about the pre-eminence, supremacy and exaltation of the existence and dominance of the One true God over any of those that mankind could invent or imagine. There really is no competition or any real comparison. How can the One only true God compare with imagined and non-existent gods? Isaiah will make this point with scolding irony later when he discusses the complete folly of those who craft idols from perishable materials.

The *third* detail in vs. 2 about these latter (last) days is that all nations (peoples) will flow (stream) to it (the “mountain of the LORD vs. 3). The identification of the mountain is Zion, the Lord’s beloved dwelling place on earth. Its location is in His capital city, Jerusalem. The time frame is at the beginning of the Lord’s messianic earthly kingdom when all rebellion against God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ has been destroyed. The Son, who is the Suffering Servant described by Isaiah, and is the long-awaited Messiah will be preparing His administration to rule the earth in justice and peace.

Peoples from all nations who have survived the great tribulation and who did not worship the beast (the antichrist) but remained faithful to the Lord will come to Zion to worship their Lord in person. Among them will be the scattered remnant, the faithful Jews who have believed in their Messiah for salvation, who will also come from all the nations to worship their Messiah. This is one of the marvelous themes of the prophetic books of the Old Testament: Isaiah 11:11-12; 14:1-2; 27:12; 43:1-7; 49:1-26; 54:7; 56:6-7; 60:1-14; 66:18-21; Jeremiah 3:11-18; 12:15; 23:1-8; 24:6; 31:1-14; 32:37-44; Ezekiel 11:14-20; 20:33-44; 28:25-26; 34:11-31; 36:22-38; 37:11-28; 39:25-29; Hosea 12:9; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:1-8; Zephaniah 3:12-20; Zechariah 10:1-12.

2:3 *Many peoples will come and say,
 "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
 to the house of the God of Jacob.
 He will teach us of his ways,
 and we will walk in his paths."
 For out of Zion the law will go forth,
 and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

During this time (messianic reign of Christ) the peoples of the earth who have survived the horrors of the great tribulation will be those who seek the Lord. They will have a desire to travel to Mount Zion to learn from the Messiah, who is described in vs. 3 as *the God of Jacob*. Not only will they receive instruction from the Lord but they will heed His word and walk in His ways. As Mount Zion will be the residence (house) of the Lord, He will make decrees and His word will be dispensed as law to all the nations of the earth. Zion as the holy mountain is often recorded in the Scriptures: Psalm 2:6; 3:4; 48:1; 87:1; Isaiah 11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25 and 66:20; Ezekiel 20:40; 43:12; Daniel 9:16, 20; 11:45; Joel 2:1; 3:17; Obadiah vs. 16; Zephaniah 3:11 and Zechariah 8:3.

2:4 *He will judge between the nations,
and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation;
they will not train for war anymore.*

During the millennial kingdom, the Messiah, will rule the earth and will be the supreme judge between the nations rendering righteous judgment. Isaiah refers to this righteous Judge in 11:14; 16:5; 33:22 and 51:5. The Lord is concerned with justice as Isaiah reveals: 1:27; 9:7; 16:5; 28:17; 30:18; 32:16; 33:5; 42:1, 3, 4; 51:4 and 61:8. The Messiah will rule in peace and nations will no longer arm themselves for war. One of the great titles for the Messiah is Prince of Peace, Isaiah 9:6. The establishment of peace and the Lord's desire to bring peace to His people is another of the grand themes of Isaiah: 9:7; 26:3, 12; 27:5; 32:17, 18; 52:7; 54:10; 55:12; 57:2, 19; 60:17 and 66:12. In contrast the wicked will not be recipients of peace: 48:22 and 57:21.

Teaching Outline of Isaiah Chapter 2:1-4

1-2 Where: The Location of the Prophecy

1-4 Who: The Peoples of the Prophecy

2 When: The Time of the Prophecy

3-4 What: The Teaching and Judgment of the Lord

4 Why: The Promised Peace of the Prophecy

3. Sin Revealed and Judgment Declared: 2:5-4:1

Walk in the Light of the Lord: Chapter 2:5-9

2:5 *O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

Following the declaration of a glorious vision of the Kingdom of the Messiah, Isaiah calls upon the people of God, "*house of Jacob*" to walk in the light of the LORD. In the New Testament, a similar exhortation is pronounced by Paul in Ephesians 5:8-20. Paul states in verses 8-10 of Ephesians 5: "*for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*" John chapter 1:4-5 identifies Jesus Christ as the source of the light. In the verses that follow (vs. 6-9), the prophet explains why the people of God need to walk in the light of the Lord.

2:6 *For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob,
because they are filled with fortunetellers from the east,
and soothsayers like the Philistines,
and they shake hands in agreement with foreigners.*

Isaiah states that the judgment of God is upon His people. God had rejected (or abandoned) His people because, *first*, they have allowed themselves to be deluded from eastern influences by filling the land with “*fortunetellers*” or filled with the customs of these eastern countries. This indictment likely included influences from nations to the north-east, Assyria and Babylonia. *Second*, they also have become “*soothsayers like the Philistines*” which is pagan superstitious divination which was expressly forbidden by God as stated in the Torah: Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:9-14. *Third*, God’s abandonment also came as a result of the bargains (covenants, pacts, agreements, treaties) they made with foreigners for “*they shake hands in agreement with foreigners*”. To this God had also forbidden as stated in Deuteronomy chapter 7.

2:7 *Their land is full of silver and gold;
there is no end to their treasures.
Their land is full of horses;
there is no end of their chariots.*

Isaiah continues with his listing of why God had rejected (abandoned) the people of Judah. *Fourth*, the people, during prosperous times, had accumulated wealth “*silver and gold*” and they had devoted themselves to the development of their own personal treasuries. The Lord as recorded in Matthew 6:19-21 warns against this accumulation of earthly wealth which was still a persistent problem with the Israelites in the first century A.D. The irony of all this accumulation of wealth by the kings of Judah during Isaiah’s times was that it was soon to be removed. Payment to Assyria for an agreement for Judah’s protection was made by Ahaz, 2 Kings 16: 8 and later the Babylonians completely stripped the temple, the house of the Lord, of all its valuable metals during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:8-17. *Fifth*, as well as accumulated wealth the people had great resources in livestock including horses which they depended upon for military strength. Isaiah explains in later passages the futility of trusting in them: 30:16 and 31:1. However in the later days they will be put to much better use as Isaiah states in 66:20. *Sixth*, not only were they amassing horses but also chariots which was a sign of military superiority. Under king Uzziah, Judah had an elite army which was ready for battle as described in 2 Chronicles 26: 6-15. In contrast to the trust the people of Judah placed in their horses and chariots was the declaration by the Psalmist in Psalm 33:16-22. The Lord had abandoned His people for they had ignored His word and placed their trust in possessions that could not save them.

2:8 *Their land also is full of idols;
they worship the work of their own hands,
that which their own fingers have made.*

Seventh, the final reason in this passage why the Lord had rejected (abandoned) the people of Judah was the most blasphemous. If trusting in covenants with pagans and in their own wealth and possessions was reason enough for God to judge them, their crafting and worship of idols was a practice that would guarantee God’s strongest retribution. Idol making and worship was condemned from the beginning of God’s relationship with His people whom He brought out of

Egypt. It was while God was speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai and dictating to him the laws that would define God's relationship with His people that these very people were engaging in the casting and worship of a pagan idol. Refer to Exodus chapter 32. Idol worship was not new. The first mention in the Scriptures of idols was the household idols of Laban that his daughter Rachel who was married to Jacob, had stolen from Laban's home. When the people of God had close association with pagans idol worship was certain to result as many passages in the Old Testament sadly testify. Isaiah mentions idol worship nineteen times in his prophecy. The Lord did not tolerate idol worship. Isaiah would later state the judgment of God on His people because of their resistance to eliminate this pagan practice. Isaiah 10:10-11. Geoffrey W. Grogan suggests a link exists between verses Isaiah 2: 6-9 and Micah 5:10-14. (Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Isaiah*, page 37).

The word idol (*elil* in Hebrew) means worthless, vain, or nothing. Its implication is stunning. The people of God turned from worshiping the One true God to the worship of nothing thus replacing the inestimable worth and glory of God with something that was worthless. This insult to God was and remains to this day the cause of a great chasm between the Creator and His creation. God cannot and will not leave it without consequence. The great problem for humans is that they are incapable of mending this rift between God and themselves. The greater praise for humans is that God alone has made reconciliation between Himself and his created people by providing a righteous once for all atonement for the sins of mankind through the death and resurrection of His Son whom He had eternally decreed to be the sin-bearer on behalf of mankind. Those who trust in the provision of salvation through the sin-bearer, the Messiah, the Son of God, would have their relationship with their Creator restored. Those who rebel and refuse to trust in the Son will live forever in judgment separated from God's gracious presence.

2:9 *So the people are humbled,
each one is brought low.
Do not forgive them.*

Those who have trusted in worthless idols and in their own possessions and in covenants with pagan nations rather than trusting in God will be abased and humbled whatever their earthly status has been. God is not a respecter of persons but will judge all people equally. The attainment of earthly wealth, great power or high position is of no importance to one's eternal destiny. Trusting in anyone or anything rather than in God is absolute folly and will result in tragic and horrific eternal consequences. Victor Buksbazen comments:

The prophet reaches the climax of outrage when he cries out in an apparent fit of anger and frustration "Forgive them not!" Somehow the human quality of the prophet comes through to us very clearly in spite of the twenty-six centuries which separate us from his times. This momentary lapse of Isaiah's of Isaiah's usual compassion for his people can only be explained by the depths of the prophet's anguish as he looked on helplessly at the growing spread of injustice, idolatry and the corroding influence of wealth, side by side with the increasing arrogance and smug self-assurance of the leaders of Judah. (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 118).

Alternatively, regarding the phrase “do not forgive them” Gary V. Smith comments:

“An alternative approach that seems more consistent with the surrounding statement about humbling the proud would not understand these words as an abrupt prayer by Isaiah, but a simple concluding statement that “you (God) should not lift up/exalt them.” In light of what was said about the sinfulness of these people, it is logical to reach the conclusion that the sinful person should not be exalted. This interpretation avoids the difficulty of having a one-line, fragmentary prayer and removes the theological idea that Isaiah did not want God to forgive these people. It also fits the contextual emphasis that God has humbled the proud and will not lift them up again. Isaiah indicates that there is no hope for restoration or an eventual healing for proud people like Uzziah. People can avoid this fate only (a) by not trusting in mankind and all their earthly achievements (2:7–8, 13–16, 22), and (b) by exalting God alone (2:11, 12, 17).” (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1, page 138).

In a footnote to this excerpt, Smith explains some of the alternate meanings of the Hebrew word *nasa*, which may have been added to bolster his suggestion that the words in many English versions, “do not forgive them” or “forgive them not” have a possible alternative interpretation that these people are not to be exalted.

The Day of Reckoning: Chapter 2:10-22

Isaiah in these verses declares that because of the sins of the people of Judah that have been identified in chapter 1 and up to verse 9 of chapter 2, God will not allow their sinful actions to continue forever without holy and just recompense. The Lord will have a day of reckoning, vs. 12. Eventually all the idols will vanish, vs. 18. Men will throw their idols to the “moles and bats” vs. 20, when God arises to make the earth tremble, verses 19 and 21. In these verses, the prophet declares that the Lord will have His day of reckoning in which all who are proud, lofty and lifted up will be abased. The specific time period for this day of reckoning is the tribulation described in Revelation chapters 6-19. One of the most pernicious evils of God’s chosen people was their continual practice of worshiping idols. This practice was eliminated somewhat when the Jewish people who had been taken captive to Babylon returned to their land of promise. Yet it was not removed forever. In the last days, during the time period of the “day of the Lord” this practice will still be a rebellious activity of man. In Revelation 9:20-21 following several months of judgment by the Lord resulting in great turmoil on the earth and perhaps billions killed it is recorded that: “*The rest of humankind, who were not killed with these plagues, refused to repent of the works of their hands or to give up worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood; which cannot see, hear, or walk.*”²¹ *They refused to repent of their murders, or their sorceries, or their sexual immorality, or their thefts.* “

2:10 *Enter into the rock,
and hide in the dust
from the terror of the LORD
and from the glory of his majesty.*

The Lord will humble those who have spurned Him by turning to idols. He will do so by His appearing in “the splendor of His majesty” and the terror that will seize His created beings at His appearance. Mankind will seek caves and the dust of the earth when the Lord arises “to make the earth tremble” verses 19 and 21. A similar description is recorded by the Apostle John in Revelation 6:12-17 regarding these events that will occur during the days of the sixth seal of the Tribulation period. The phrase, “*the glory of His majesty*” can be understood at the revealed visible display of God’s brilliant splendor. Isaiah repeats the phrase, “*glory of His majesty*” in vs. 19 and 21. This tri-fold repetition is not incidental. When describing the wondrous portrayal of the Lord, Isaiah recorded the words describing the Lord as “holy, holy, holy in 6:3. The emphatic repetition of the glory of the Lord’s majesty is set in stunning contrast to the humble position of mankind whose arrogant looks will be abased or brought low (vs. 11), and who will be driven to holes of the ground (vs. 19) and into the caverns of the rocks (vs.21). Verse 22 of this section aptly summarizes Isaiah’s message: “*Stop trusting in human beings, whose breath is in their nostrils.*” See also vs. 17.

Glory is the Hebrew word *hadar* and has the meaning of glorious brilliance, magnificence and honor. The Old Testament occurrences of glory (splendor) and majesty describing the Lord are: 1 Chronicles 16:27; Job 37:22; Psalm 8:1; 96:6; 104:1; 145:5 and in Isaiah 2:10, 19 and 21. Majesty (Hebrew *gaown*) has the meaning of excellence and exaltation. It occurs also in Isaiah 24:14. Majesty (Hebrew *geuwth*) meaning excellence and lifted up occurs in Isaiah 26:10. Also majesty (Hebrew *hadar*) meaning splendor, glory and dignity occurs in Isaiah 35:2. More comment on these words will be made within the notes for the verses mentioned above. In the New Testament, the majestic glory of god is described in Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 2 Peter 1:16-17 (referring to Christ’s transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-13; and Luke 9:28-36); Jude vs. 25 and Revelation 4:11 and 5:12-13.

2:11-12 *The arrogant looks of humans will be brought low,
and the haughtiness of people will be humbled,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.*
¹² *For there will be a day of the LORD of hosts
against all the proud and haughty,
and against all that is lifted up,
and they will be brought low,*

The Lord will have a day when mankind will be humbled and their proud look will be brought low. The Hebrew *shaphel* means to be abased, to brought low, and humbled. It occurs also in Isaiah 2:9: “brought low;” 2:12: “brought low;” 2:17: “brought low;” 5:15: “brought down” and “humbled;” and in 10:33: “brought low.” The phrase in vs. 11, “*in that day*” is of vital importance in understanding how far reaching the prophecy of Isaiah extends. This “day” has not yet occurred but will certainly arrive in a time of great calamity for the earth and its inhabitants including the Jewish people who have not repented of their sins of worshiping idols and rejecting their Messiah. In the New Testament, this time is referred to as the time of testing (Revelation 3:10) which is the tribulation described in Revelation chapters 6 to 19.

The phrase “in that day” is an oft repeated warning in the Old Testament referring to the “day of the Lord” Old Testament references to this day are recorded in: Isaiah 2:12, 13:6 and 13:9; Ezekiel 13:5 and 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31 and 3:14; Amos 5:18 and 5:20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7 and 1:14; Zechariah 14:1 and Malachi 4:5. New Testament references are Acts 2:20; 1Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and 2 Peter 3:10. See also the notes of this study for Isaiah 4:2-6.

David L. Cooper explains:

THE great day of Jehovah, which is the Tribulation Period, is described in Isaiah 2:12-22. The prophets constantly foretold this day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Joel, one of the earliest writing prophets, spoke in the most graphic manner in the second and third chapters of his prophecy concerning this period. Amos also described this time of judgment. Zephaniah and Zechariah also foretold it. The Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25--the Olivet Discourse--enlarged upon it. In Revelation, chapters 6-19, we find the fullest description of the judgments of the great day of Jehovah. (D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-October 1943).

2:13 *against all the cedars of Lebanon,
that are high and lifted up,
against all the oaks of Bashan,*

The prophet continues the declaration of how wide will be the abasement of created things when the Lord has His day of reckoning (vs. 12). In the list of created things that shall be abased, the great trees are *first* mentioned. The cedars of Lebanon were of great value as building materials for Solomon’s temple: I Kings chapters 5-7; they were compared to the growth of the righteous: Psalm 92:12; they were planted by the Lord: Psalm 104:6 and often mentioned in judgment: Isaiah 14:8, 37:24; Jeremiah 22:23; Ezekiel 27:5, 31:3; Zechariah 11:1 and a comparison of blessing in the future for Israel: Hosea 14:6. The oaks of Bashan are mentioned next. These oaks are mentioned along with the cypress and cedars of Lebanon as “*the majestic ones are destroyed.*” in Zechariah 11:1-2 which may be understood as a parallel passage with Isaiah 2:13-16.

2:14 *against all the high mountains,
against all the high hills,*

The *second* created things mentioned are the high mountains and the high hills. These obvious symbols of height and grandeur will be brought low and leveled when the Lord arises to make the earth tremble (vs. 19). This may have a reference to the great earthquake described in Revelation 16:18-20. The pagan peoples of the ancient world concocted myths regarding false “gods” and the worship of these “gods” and idols on high mountains. Deuteronomy 12:2, 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 16:4; 17:10-11; 2 Chronicles 21:11; Isaiah 57:7, 65:7; Ezekiel 6:3, 13; 18: 6, 11, 15; 22:9; and Hosea 4:13. Scripture also declares God’s judgment on the mountains: Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 18:7, 97:5; Isaiah 41:15, 42:15; Jeremiah 4:24; Ezekiel 38:20; Micah 1:4; Habakkuk 3:6; Revelation 6:14-16;

2:15 *against every lofty tower,
against every fortified wall,*

The *third* created things mentioned are lofty (high) towers and walls built by mankind which also shall be destroyed and brought low in the day the Lord arises to make the earth tremble. There is no structure, tower, wall, building, or anything crafted by mankind that will be able to withstand the great humbling of the earth when God decides to bring His judgment to all of His creation. The people of the earth had an early reminder of this when they were building the tower and city of Babel, Genesis 11:1-9. See also Isaiah 30:25. When the Lord brings His judgment in His great wrath, the people of the earth will not seek to hide from Him in their buildings and grand structures they have built but in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. Revelation 6:12-17.

2:16 *against all the ships of Tarshish,
and against every beautiful boat.*

The *fourth* things mentioned are the ships and water craft mankind has built to conduct trade. Like the sixth item (vs. 18), these things are created by man and not by God. These also will be destroyed in God's day of wrath. The "*ships of Tarshish*" refer to trading vessels likely going to or returning from Tarshish and representing trade between the ancient nations of Isaiah's day. Tarshish may have been a trading port in Spain.

2:17 *People's pride will be humbled,
and human haughtiness will be brought low;
the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.*

For emphasis, vs. 17 repeats the thought of vs. 11. The *fifth* created thing mentioned that will be humbled and abased is the pride and lofty self-elevation (pride and haughtiness) of mankind. It is indicative of mankind's fallen condition that humans are placed near the end of this list rather than in first place. Yet the overall emphasis of the longer passage, verses 5-22 of chapter 2 of Isaiah is the judgment of God on man's elevated and self-centered pride and position after they have rejected the rule of the Lord and any obedience to Him.

Thomas Constable comments on verses 12-17:

"Everyone, not just the Israelites, who exalts himself against the Lord will suffer humiliation. The Lord's day of reckoning (v. 12) is any day in which He humbles the haughty, but it is particularly the Tribulation—in which He will humble haughty unbelievers. Isaiah used nature and the works of man to symbolize people (cf. 1:30; 6:13; 9:10; 10:33—11:1; 44:14; 60:16). Here several of these symbols represent the spiritual pride of Israel (cf. Rom. 12:3; Eph. 4:2)."

"Throughout this section (2:6—4:1) and many others in the Book of Isaiah, there is an interesting interplay between the judgment which the Lord will inflict on the nation by the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities and the judgment which will come on Israel and the whole world in the 'last days' just before the Millennium. Probably Isaiah and the other prophets had no idea of the

lengthy time span that would intervene between those exiles and this later time of judgment. Though many of the predictions in 2:10-21 happened when Assyria and Babylon attacked Israel and Judah, the passage looks ahead to a cataclysmic judgment on the whole world ('when He rises to shake the earth,' vv. 19, 21)."⁵⁷ [Note 57: John A. Martin, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*," p. 1039] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 26).

2:18 *Idols will completely vanish.*

The *sixth* and final "thing" mentioned is not something created by God but by man (see also vs. 16). The placement of idols at the end of the list is perhaps for dramatic intent and may be a literary device by the prophet to emphasize God's wrath in ascending order. God will have a day of reckoning on His created order and it appears from Scripture that idols are a most persistent plague on God's creation which had been "subjected to futility" since the fall of humans from their innocence in the Garden of Eden. (Romans 8:20-22). Isaiah states in 2:18 that "*the idols will completely vanish*" when the Lord has His day of reckoning. The fact of idol worship was one of the main reasons the Lord caused the people of Judah to be taken captive to Babylon for seventy years and the people of the northern nation of Israel to be purged from the land by the Assyrians. Yet in the New Testament those who are followers of Christ are admonished by the Apostle John: "*My dear children, guard yourselves from idols.*" 1 John 5:21. Idol worship has not diminished and will not until the Lord has His day of reckoning. See also Revelation 9:20. Isaiah earlier commented on idols, vs. 8 and continues his prophetic declaration against them in the verses following vs. 18.

2:19 *They will enter the caves of the rocks
and into the holes in the ground
from the terror of LORD
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he arises to terrify the earth.*

When God's day of reckoning finally comes, when He arises to make the earth tremble (see also vs. 21), humans will seek refuge against His wrath. Instead of running to Him in repentance and humility, they will run "into caves of the rocks and into holes in the ground." Their prideful self-exaltation will finally be brought low, even to beneath the surface of the earth. The Lord will rise up with terror but yet with the glory of His majesty. (See vs. 10). The timing of this event is during the Great Tribulation as described in similar words in Revelation chapter 6 verses 12-17. This is not an allegorical prophetic utterance by the prophet nor is it a type of representative judgment. Isaiah uses plain language to describe a coming historical event that will happen literally just as he described it. These words, which the Lord gave Isaiah to proclaim, are meant to bring humans to repentance from their rejection of the majestic and magnificent God of creation and for them to turn to Him in humble worship and praise. God is extending an opportunity for His chosen people to repent and turn to Him in faith. God still extends this opportunity to all humans today if they will only listen and obey Him.

2:20 *In that day people will throw away their idols of silver,
and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
to the moles and to the bats.*

As a direct result of “the day,” when the Lord arises “*to terrify the earth*” (verses 19 and 21), humans will finally be in great dread and fear of the Lord. They will throw away their idols which they have made by themselves and which they worship. Some may wonder why the worship of idols crafted from costly metals, silver and gold would be so prevalent in the period (Tribulation) just before the return of the Lord. It is popular to explain away the worship of hand crafted idols by describing anything that would replace man’s devotion and attention to the Lord as an idol of worship. Yet Scripture is very clear that in the last days the worship of hand crafted idols will be widespread (Revelation 9:20). As the world descends into paganism as the last days quickly approach, the so-called sophistication and liberation of humans, in rejecting any influence of God in their lives, will result in the most blasphemous activity humans can conceive. The worship of the true God will be rejected. The Apostle Paul comments: “*For even though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, or give thanks to him; but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images resembling corruptible man, birds, four-footed animals and creeping things.*” (Romans 1:22-23). The idols man will craft will look like images of humans, birds, animals and insects which they will worship.

2:21 *They will enter the caverns of the rocks,
and into the crevices of the rocky cliffs,
from the terror of the LORD
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he arises to terrify the earth.*

Vs. 21 is a re-phrasing of Isaiah’s previous declaration stated in vs. 19. Not only will humans “cast away” their worthless idols which they have been worshiping to the creatures that inhabit caves and holes but they themselves will seek refuge from the dread of the Lord’s appearance in these dark places. These things will occur during the latter part of the tribulation when mankind will flee from the Lord’s presence and from His great wrath. (Revelation 6:12-17).

2:22 *Stop trusting in human beings,
whose breath is in their nostrils.
For why would you even give them a thought?*

This final verse of chapter 2 is one of the great thematic verses summing up the teaching of the entire book of Isaiah: *“Stop trusting in human beings, whose breath is in their nostrils. For why would you even give them a thought? Consider also:*

“In that day a person will look to their Maker, and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands; neither will they look to what their fingers have made, the Asherah poles or incense altars. Isaiah 17:7-8.

“Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of his servant? Anyone who walks in darkness, and has no light, let them trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God.”
Isaiah 50:10

“I, even I, am he who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere mortals, and of the son of man who is as fleeting as grass”? Isaiah 51:12.

Isaiah repeatedly warned the people of Judah to trust in God rather than in man. When a national crisis occurred and the nation was threatened by military force from a much larger kingdom, the kings of Judah (and Israel) would turn to seek military aid from the surrounding pagan nations. Isaiah records a single incident, when Jerusalem was facing certain doom from the army of the Assyrians, king Hezekiah finally turned in faith to the Lord. (See Isaiah chapters 36-37). Isaiah’s message of trusting alone in the One true God was for all people in Judah and applies to all peoples today. In what some consider to be the very middle verses of the Bible, Psalm 118:8-9, the Psalmist declares: *“It is better to take refuge in the LORD, than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the LORD, than to trust in princes.”*

Introduction: 3:1-7:

The prophet warns that along with the bread and water, the leaders of the people will be removed from the land. Without adult leadership, capricious children will rule over them and the youth of the land will storm against the elder and no adult will desire to be a leader. This passage, 3:1-7, and the remainder of chapter 3 is a far future prophecy of the anarchy that will be prevalent in Israel during the great tribulation period of the last days. The context of the extended passage of Isaiah, from chapter 2:5 to 3:26, most certainly applies to the tribulation period when the Lord will have His day of reckoning and when He arises to terrify the earth. This extended passage lies within two beautiful depictions of the kingdom of Messiah: 2:1-4 and 4:1-6. The Messianic kingdom will follow the tribulation period. An extended discussion of both the tribulation period and the kingdom of the Messiah will be provided in the specific passages in Isaiah relating to these two periods. For example, see notes on Isaiah 2:1-4 for the first great portion of Isaiah on the kingdom of the Messiah.

3:1 *For look, the sovereign LORD of hosts,
is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah
support and supply,
every piece of bread and drop of water,*

The introductory words of 3:1 are translated “*For look.*” These words link the message of the prophet recorded in chapter 2 and continue the narrative so that the reader understands that God is continuing His declaration of judgment on the people of Judah and specifically Jerusalem. The message of judgment in chapter 3 and chapter 2:5-22, is declared by “*the sovereign LORD of hosts*”. It is the same title of God that Isaiah will state again in 3:15, 10:16, 23, 24, 33; 19:4; and 28:22. The notes on Isaiah 1:9 contain a brief explanation of the meaning of these titles.

The *first* thing to be taken away from Jerusalem and Judah as a result of God’s judgment upon his people during the days of tribulation will be “*supply and support.*” This is likely a reference to the removal of military support and leadership for Israel during the horrific days of the great Tribulation when any nations who had previously supported Israel will have withdrawn their support and promised protection. Those who have leadership of the military forces of Israel will also be removed leaving the Jewish people vulnerable and without protection from their enemies who will unite to assault them. These enemies will descend upon Israel during the tribulation period with the evil intent to annihilate the Jewish people from the earth. These enemies will be gathered together “*to the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon*” during the days of the pouring out of the sixth bowl judgment. (Revelation 16:12-16). Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum explains:

“While the term “Battle of Armageddon” has been commonly used, it is really a misnomer, for more than one battle will be taking place. For this reason, many prophetic teachers have stopped employing that term and are using the term “Campaign of Armageddon,”.... But this too is a misnomer because there will be no fighting in Armageddon itself; all of the fighting will take place elsewhere. A more biblical name for this final conflict is found in the closing words of verse 14: *the war of the great day of God, the Almighty*. This is a more accurate description of the nature and extent of this final conflict.” (Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, page 311).

The *second* thing to be taken away from Jerusalem and Judah will be “*every piece of bread and every drop of water.*” While many scholars may want to reduce the significance of these words by alluding to a time of want where food and water will be scarce, there is nothing in the context of verse 1 that would indicate that Isaiah was overstating the extent of the complete removal of these essential needs for sustaining life. In Revelation 16:19-20, it is recorded that the judgment of God against the earth, including Babylon will be so great that the cities of the nations will be destroyed along with islands and mountains of the earth. It is within this context that Isaiah could prophesy that no life sustaining source would survive.

3:2-3 *the mighty man and the warrior,
the judge and the prophet,
the diviner and the elder,
³ the captain of fifty and the honorable person,
the counselor and the expert craftsman,
and the skilful enchanter.*

Not only will the land be bereft of its food supply but the Lord will also remove many aspects of its human leadership: mighty man, warrior, judge, prophet, diviner, elder, army captain, honorable person, counselor, expert craftsman and skillful enchanter. In providing this list it is helpful to consider the intent of the Lord's meaning. It is obvious that not every possible leader is mentioned yet a wide spectrum of society is stated so the meaning of the Lord is clearly understood. Victor Buksbazen comments:

“The Lord will also remove all military and civil authority, whether duly appointed, or even unlawfully established. The work of the Lord will be so complete in its devastation that it will reach down to the lowest ranks of the military establishment and civil authorities.

“The commander of fifty” is the equivalent of a junior officer or sergeant in our modern military order. The judge and the prophet and the elder represent established and legitimate authority; the diviner, the skilled magician and the expert enchanter, are the popular but forbidden and unlawful counselors to whom the mass of the people have so frequently resorted, in defiance of Jehovah Himself, and of His law (Deut. 18:9-14).” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 121).

3:4 *I will make the young to be their princes,
and infants will rule over them.*

Because of the removal by God of the leaders of society in all respects, there will only be capricious children left to rule them. Some attest that the more immediate context of this prophecy was the conquering of Jerusalem and Judah by the Babylonians which started in 605 B.C and was completed in 586 B.C. However, it is best to understand that this prophecy concerns the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) which will be the period of tribulation just prior to the return of the Messiah to rescue the remnant of His people. The Assyrians had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Isaiah and the people of Jerusalem and Judah had knowledge of what it was like for a foreign nation to devastate the land and remove by death and deportation, its leaders and influential citizens. As the words of chapter 3 are addressed to Jerusalem and Judah, the people of the southern kingdom would be in dread of what God has proclaimed would happen to them as it had already happened to their northern kinsmen. God will, because of the sin of the people, leave them without mature leadership and chaos would result. With only children and the young left to lead them, they would be at the mercy of their enemies who will have no mercy and only design to completely remove them from the earth.

3:5 *The people will be oppressed,
everyone by another,
and everyone by his neighbor.
The young will behave proudly against the old,
and the base against the honorable.*

The chaotic nature of society ruled by capricious children (vs. 4) is described by Isaiah. The people left alive in Jerusalem and Judah will be oppressed by each other (within their homes) and by their neighbors. The young will oppress the elderly and those who are the “inferior” of society will oppress those who are considered “honorable”.

When God is rejected as the rightful ruler of His people, sinful, unholy and unrighteous people, like those described in Isaiah 1:4-8 will dominate society and as will be the situation in Jerusalem and Judah, no one will assume responsible leadership as verses 6 and 7 testify.

3:6-7 *A person will even grab hold of his brother
in his father's house, saying,
"You have clothing,
come you be our ruler,
and let this ruin be under your rule."*

⁷ *In that day he will cry out,
"I cannot cure this;
for there is neither bread or clothing in my house,
you must not make me ruler of the people.*

The complete destruction of Jerusalem and Judah is seen in the deplorable situation of the home life of those living during these terrifying times. Without food for sustenance and clothing for covering the body, the people will cry out in desperation, "I cannot cure this" as they seek someone who at least has clothes to assume leadership of the people. David L. Cooper, comments:

At the time here foreseen, we are told that one man will take another of his father's house and insist that he assume the leadership and bear the responsibility for the wreck and ruin that is certain to come upon the nation. This prediction shows that the situation in Israel in the time of the Tribulation will become desperate--without any hope of recovery. Hence there will be those in the ranks who will push others forward and make them assume the leadership in order that the impending ruin may come under their management. (D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-October 1943).

Introduction: 3:8-15

The prophet states the reason for this terrifying judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah. They have fallen. This indictment on His people by the Lord extends to all of the people and specifically to the elders and princes of the land who the Lord says have devoured the vineyard, plundered the poor, crushed His people and have grinded the face of the poor. The people and their leaders have nothing to respond. Their time is up. Judgment awaits and it is a bitter future that they will have to endure.

3:8 *For Jerusalem has stumbled,
and Judah has fallen;
because their words and their deeds are against the LORD,
defying his glorious watchfulness.*

As described by the prophet, God explains the root of the reason judgment will fall upon His people: “*Because their words and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious watchfulness.*” “Watchfulness” (DASV) is the Hebrew word *ayin*, which is translated most often in the Old Testament including Isaiah, as “eyes.” The DASV translation of “*defying his glorious watchfulness*” is a suitable rendering. The KJV has: “*to provoke the eyes of his glory.*” The ESV has: “*defying his glorious presence.*” These translations help to capture the shocking wickedness of God’s people, who although they were aware of God’s presence, chose to mock and scorn their Creator and as vs. 9 reveals, they unashamedly performed their evilness in rebellious defiance before His glorious eyes (presence).

3:9 *The look on their face witnesses against them;
they flaunt their sin like Sodom;
they do not hide it.
Woe to their soul!
They have brought disaster on themselves.*

This verse is perhaps the most stunning indictment of sinful behavior in the Scriptures. The Jewish people will be boldly and defiantly practicing their evil behavior during the days of tribulation when God is judging them and the earth inhabitants for continuing to rebel against Him. Verses 8-9 reveal that sinful humanity is solely responsible for the consequences of their sin that they arrogantly and with hubris debauchery openly flaunt it in the face of their Creator. The NIV states this indictment with arresting clarity: “**The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.**”

Modern society has so fallen into the depths of depravity that they openly display their lascivious and abominable lifestyles in parades in the cities of the world with many elected officials giving their support by participating in and some even leading the parade. God will not leave this situation unopposed. He will judge those nations that promote and participate in this evil behavior for those who so “*parade their sin*” and show openly that they have defied God’s commands and have rebelled against His glorious presence. For comment on the word “woe” see notes on vs. 11.

3:10 *Tell the righteous, that it will go well with them,
for they will eat the fruit of their labors.*

Verses 10-11 are similar to wisdom literature in Scripture: well for the righteous and woe to the wicked. Those who are righteous will reap the benefits of their obedience to God and love and commitment to Him. The ultimate benefit will be living forever in the presence of God’s glorious presence. Many righteous followers of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, will not see the “fruit of their actions” (compare Galatians 6:7-8) during their sojourn upon the earth. For now, in the oppressive atmosphere of the post-modern world, many Christians are persecuted and many are executed because of their faithful allegiance and obedience to their Lord. The days described in Revelation chapters 6-19 are fast approaching.

3:11 *Woe to the wicked! Disaster!
For exactly what their hands have done
will be done back to them.*

Isaiah declares a prophetic “woe” on the wicked. The word “woe” occurs 22 times in Isaiah (DASV). The most remembered is likely Isaiah’s exclamation of “woe” when He saw the Lord, lofty and exalted in the Temple (Isaiah 6:5). Woe (Hebrew *owy*) also is exclaimed on the wicked in vs. 9 above. It has the meaning of: a cry of lamentation or a lament of impending judgment. In English, it can be understood as a lament of certain grief. It was a word frequently used by Jesus Christ in judgment on those, often the religious leaders of Israel, who failed to fulfill their obligations to the people of Israel. The wicked, Isaiah states in vs. 11 will receive what they deserve. The words “wicked” and “wickedness” occur 13 times in Isaiah. It is the Hebrew word *rasha* and has the meaning of being guilty and deserving of punishment. The famous phrase stated by Isaiah: “*There is no peace for the wicked*” occurs twice in Isaiah: 48:22 and 57:21 and complete important divisions of Isaiah chapters 40 to 66.

The word “Disaster!” in verse 11 translates the Hebrew word *ra*, which has the meaning of bad or evil. This word stands alone in verse 11 and some modern versions have added words to explain the meaning. The DASV simply translates *ra* as “Disaster!” which conveys the thought that the wicked will reap to themselves what they have sown as the rest of the verse explains.

3:12 *As for my people, children oppress them,
women rule over them.
O my people, those leading you mislead you,
and confuse the direction of your paths.*

Verse 12 is an emphatic précis of verses 4-7. It is evident that the period of time that Isaiah is prophesying about cannot be the present for they have a king and leaders that rule over them. The time Isaiah is indicating is in the far future as the context of the greater passage reveals. The people will be oppressed by children. Male leadership will vanish and women will lead those who are left in the land during the rule of Antichrist in the terrifying days of the tribulation. The result of this oppression and of those who will lead them astray is that the people will be confused in seeking a direction. The KJV is very pointed in its statement of judgment on these people: “*they which lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.*” Isaiah 28:14-15 is another stinging indictment on these people whose leaders lead them to destruction.

Verses 13-15 comprise a small section declaring that the Lord will rise up to judge His people for their selfish actions.

Thomas Constable comments:

“Yahweh is the ultimate Judge of His people, and He would contend with His human representatives who used their positions to fatten themselves rather than feeding their people (cf. Zech. 11:1-17). Their possessions witnessed to their stealing from their neighbors. The vineyard is a common figure for Israel (cf. 5:1, 7; Ps. 80:8-18; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:6-8; Hos. 10:1). The people belonged to the Lord, not these abusing leaders who crushed them and ground them down to get out of them as much as they could for themselves (cf. Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:20-21).” (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 29).

3:13 *The LORD rises to make the accusation;
he stands to judge the peoples.*

The righteous LORD will not allow sinful and rebellious actions to continue without consequence. God will rise up to contend or make the accusation against His people. “Accusation” in the DASV is the Hebrew word *riyb*, which has the meaning of an indictment or plea in a legal setting such as a court. The Lord will therefore “stand to judge” His people. He alone will act as the One bringing the charge, as prosecutor, as judge and as One delivering punishment. Not only will God act as the sole judge of His people during the days of tribulation but in the Millennial kingdom as Isaiah will state later: Isaiah 11:3-4; 16:5; 33:22 and 51:5.

3:14 *The LORD comes to pronounce judgment on the elders
and on the princes of his people.
"It is you who have ruined the vineyard;
the plunder stolen from the poor is in your houses.*

God brings His judgment on the leaders (elders and princes) of the people who have neglected their duty of faithfulness and oversight of the people and have acted corruptly and selfishly. These leaders have “devoured” the vineyard which is used by Isaiah to represent the people. The picture of the **vineyard** is a common theme throughout Isaiah. It is first introduced in 1:8: “*The daughter of Zion is left like a hut in a vineyard*” and it next mentioned in 3:14. The prophet’s main description of the vineyard is as a parable in chapter 5:1-7 and also in 5:10. Other references are 16:10; 27:2; 36:17; 37:30 and 65:21. An expanded description on the meaning of the vineyard is seen in the notes on chapter 5:1-7. These leaders have also added to the misery of the poor by plundering the weak and helpless and accumulating the confiscated goods within their own houses.

3:15 *Why do you crush my people,
and grind the faces of the poor?"
says the sovereign LORD of hosts.*

The Lord directs His wrath on the leaders of His people for their evil mistreatment of the people. Victor Buksbazen comments:

“The prophet speaking for the Lord, seems to be almost livid with outrage and indignation. He cries: “*Mahlahem?*” – “By what right? “What do you mean that you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?”

Here we have a very striking metaphor, tellingly employed by the prophet. Just as the stones of a mill crush grain and then grind it fine flour, later to be baked and eaten as bread, so the leadership of Jerusalem and Judah crush and grind the faces of the people in order to devour them completely.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 122).

Introduction 3:16-4:1

The Lord, through the prophet, denounces the pride and self-exaltation of the women of Zion whom the prophet states as the “daughters of Zion”. The coming judgment on the Jewish nation will result in their shameful defilement with plucked out scalps, they will smell like putrefaction and will wear sackcloth instead of fine cloths. A further shame for the women will be that the coming battle against the nation’s enemies will result in a lack of marriageable men as the men of the nation will be killed during the days of tribulation. Like the leaders, elders and princes of the land, the women also will face the consequences of their sinful pride and evil actions. This section ending with vs. 1 of chapter 4 has the connecting phrase “in that day” that begins the messianic kingdom section of chapter 4:2-6. Thus, the entire section Isaiah 2:5 to 4:1 refers to the judgment of the Jewish peoples, and the inhabitants of the earth, during the horrifying days of the tribulation

3:16 *The LORD says, The daughters of Zion are haughty,
and walk with outstretched necks and seductive eyes,
walking with dainty little steps as they go,
and jingling with their feet.*

The prophet continues to announce the judgment of God on His people with a message directed to the proud and prosperous women who are called the ‘daughters of Zion’. All females in Jerusalem would be represented by this title which Isaiah uses only in 3:16-17 and 4:4. It occurs in Song of Solomon 3:11 and a similar title, “daughters of Judah” occurs in Psalm 97:8. The declaration of judgment in 3:16 to 4:1 is likely upon the women who were married to husbands belonging to the king’s court and other rich members of society. The reign of Uzziah was very prosperous and the king had cities built and a large army well equipped for battle. (2 Chronicles 26:1-15). The main indictment against these prosperous women, during Isaiah’s day and will be in the last days, is their vanity and pride for they flaunted their wealth with their haughty walk with their heads held high and their noses in the air, their seductive (flirtatious) eyes, walking with mincing (small and quick) steps and having bangles or tinkling ornaments around their ankles that would announce their coming so everyone could observe them.

3:17 *Therefore the Lord will strike with scabs
the top of the head of the daughters of Zion,
and the LORD will make them bald.*

As a result of this vain display, the Lord will take direct judgmental action against them by inflicting their heads with ugly scabs and a loss of hair on their foreheads which would render them ugly and repulsive to look upon.

3:18-23 *In that day the Lord will take away their beautiful anklets,
the headbands, and the crescent necklaces,
¹⁹ the earrings, bracelets, and veils,
²⁰ the headdresses, the ankle bracelets, the sashes,
the perfume boxes, and amulets,
²¹ the rings and nose rings,
²² the party dresses, robes, shawls and purses,
²³ the hand mirrors, fine linen garments,
the turbans and shawls.*

Isaiah states the time frame, “in that day” in vs. 18 which connects this judgment on the women with the preceding larger passage beginning in 2:5 and continuing to 4:1 with reminders of the time in which these judgment will occur: “that day” in 2:11, 12, 17, 20; and 3:7. Following the time of judgment in the day the Lord has appointed will also be a period of blessing indicated by the phrase “in the latter days” 2:2-4. The coming period of judgment on the proud women of Jerusalem (Zion) will be during the tribulation period. The Lord, according to verses 18-23, will remove the vain display of wealth from the women which includes a long list of jewelry and other items they have worn to flaunt their wealthy status.

3:24 *Instead of sweet perfumes there will be a rotten stench;
and instead of a sash, a rope;
instead of a beautiful hairdo, baldness;
instead of a rich robe, sackcloth;
a slave branding instead of beauty.*

The Lord next states with what He will replace the items of luxury. Sweet perfume will be replaced with putrefaction (a melting stinking rottenness). Belts (sash) will be replaced by rough ropes. A “beautiful hairdo” will be replaced with baldness that have the hairs plucked out. Sackcloth, a rough and scratchy ugly garment of disgrace will be worn instead of fine cloths. The armies of Antichrist will brand the women causing great pain and a ugly mark removing any previous beauty they had.

3:25 *Your men will fall by the sword,
and your warriors in the war.*

The women will be humiliated in this way (vs. 24) because there will be no men left to protect them and preserve their vain lifestyle. The mighty men and warriors will be put to death in a future time of warfare which is described in the notes for verse 3:1.

3:26 *Her gates will lament and mourn;
deserted she will sit on the ground.*

Because of the destruction caused by the forces of Antichrist during the Tribulation period, the gates of Zion now referred to as belonging to the women who are left, will lament and mourn the devastation the women face. Dejected, disgraced, defiled and disfigured, the women will sit on the ground within the lonely and mournful gates pondering this tragedy that has come upon them.

4:1 *Seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own food, and wear our own clothes, just let us be called by your name; take away our shame.*

With the great men and warriors defeated and dead, these women who have been marked by the judgment of God, will seek to obtain some semblance of self-worth by clinging on to any willing man who will marry them. Even if it means that a man will have at least seven wives, these women will use their own resources instead of relying on the provisions of the man. They will do this so that the “reproach” of being left unmarried and alone will be removed.

Teaching Outline of Isaiah Chapter 2:5 to 4:1

Verses	Outline
2:5-11	Removal of Foreign Influences
2:12-22	Removal of Useless Idols
3:1-7	Removal of Evil Leaders
3:8-15	Removal of the Place of Zion’s Men
3:16-4:1	Removal of the Pride of Zion’s Daughters

4. The Branch and the Messianic Covering: 4:2-6

Introduction to Isaiah 4:2-6

This is one of the most beautiful promises of the coming kingdom of the Lord contained in all of Scripture. It is an addition to the glories of the Messianic kingdom the prophet declares in 2:1-4 and 28:5-8, 15-17 and 65:18. In this section, 4:2-6, the reader of Isaiah is introduced to the “Branch of the Lord” and will discover that this metaphor refers to a Person who will come in the future to restore the relationship between God and His chosen nation Israel. Yet there is much more that the “Branch” will do with the people and land of Israel and in particular what the Branch will accomplish on Mount Zion.

This section begins with the words, “in that day”. The reader must consider what day is Isaiah writing about. References in Isaiah (DASV) to this day, the far future day of the Lord, is recorded in the previous verse (vs. 1), and also in 2:11, 17, 20; 3:7,18; 10:20; 11:10, 11; 12:1, 4; 17:4, 7, 9; 19:16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24; 24:21; 25:9; 26:1; 27:1, 2, 12, 13; 28:5; 29:18; and 30:23.

It refers to a time when the Lord will bring holy justice and also great blessings to the people of Israel. In the broader context of the opening chapters of Isaiah it includes the description of chapter 2:2: “*in the latter days*”. Therefore, “in that day” refers to the time when the Lord will finally deal with the sins of the people of Israel and when He will set up His throne to rule from Mount Zion. It is also called “the day of the Lord,” in Isaiah in 2:12; 13:6, and 9. Other O.T. references to the phrase “day of the Lord” include : Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 5:20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 1:14; Malachi 4:5. N.T. references include: Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; and 2 Peter 3:10.

It also is referred to many times as simply “that day”. The meaning of these shorter phrases must be understood in the context of the passage as is obvious from Zechariah chapter 14 in which Zechariah is describing the terrifying beginnings and glorious results of this future day of the Lord. Not every passage containing these shorter phrases is a direct reference to the future day of the Lord.

4:2 *In that day the branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and beauty of the survivors of Israel.*

Vs. 2 of chapter 4 provides the context of what will happen in this future “day”. Isaiah begins with a designation: “*the Branch* (capitalized in some versions) *of the LORD*.” It is critical to the understanding of the events to determine from Scripture exactly who is the “*Branch of the Lord*”

In Isaiah 11:1-2 the branch is referred to as a person whom the Spirit of the LORD will rest:
The Spirit of the LORD will rest upon him,

In Jeremiah 23: 5-6 the Prophet declares that this person will be righteous, will reign as a King; and will act with wisdom, justice and righteousness. His name will be called: The LORD is our righteousness.

*"The days are coming," says the LORD,
"that I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
and he will reign as king
and will act with wisdom,
justice and righteousness in the land.*

⁶ *In his days Judah will be saved,
and Israel will dwell in safety;
and this is his name by which he will be called:
'The LORD is our righteousness.'"*

Jeremiah later provides more information about this Branch.

In Jeremiah 33:14-16, the Prophet states:

“Look, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will perform the good promise that I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

¹⁵ *In those days, and at that time,*

*I will cause a righteous Branch to sprout up for David;
he will execute justice and righteousness in the land.*

¹⁶ *In those days Judah will be saved,
and Jerusalem will dwell in safety.*

*She will be called by this name:
‘the LORD our righteousness.’”*

In Zechariah 3:8, the Prophet states:

Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you; for they are a portend of things to come for I am going to introduce my servant, the Branch.

As a result of the introduction of the Branch, in Zechariah 3:9, the Lord declares:

I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day.

Zechariah later records in 6:12-13:

‘This is what the LORD of hosts says, Look, here is the man whose name is the Branch. He will branch out of his place and will build the temple of the LORD.

¹³ *Yes, he will be the one to build the temple of the LORD, and he will bear the honor, and will sit on his throne and rule. There will be a priest with him on his throne and there will be perfect harmony between the two of them.’*

From the above Scriptural references, it is abundantly evident that the “Branch” of Isaiah 4:2 refers to a man and that this man will come in the future to reign as king and He will execute justice and righteousness in the land (of Israel) and on the earth and in His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. He will also build a new temple in which He will reign as king and serve as priest. There should be no doubt that this person is the future Messiah who will come as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords as is recorded in Revelation 19:16.

Victor Buksbazen comments:

“The ancient Chaldee paraphrase of Isaiah 4:2 translates “the Branch of Jehovah” as the “Messiah of Jehovah.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 126.)

The word “Branch” in Isaiah 4:2, in the Hebrew is *semah*, which literally means branch or sprout. King David, hundreds of years prior to Isaiah’s day, during what is recorded as his last words, in 2 Samuel 23:5 stated: “*Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all thing and secure. For this is all my salvation and my desire; Will He not make it increase?*” (NKJV). In the context of the everlasting covenant that God made with David, the word “*desire*” (last word of 2 Samuel 23:5), can also be translated as “grow” which literally means to spring forth or bring it to fruition. It is likely this is a prophetic reference to the role of the Messiah as the Branch who will sprout or spring forth to bring to fruition God’s plans for a future kingdom in which the Messiah will rule from Jerusalem sitting on the throne of David. The everlasting covenant David mentions to in 2 Samuel 23:5 refers to an earlier promise God gave David, as recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-13: “*When your days are completed and you sleep with your fathers, I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*” Also, verse 16 of 2 Samuel 7 states: “*Your house and your kingdom will be made secure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever.*”

Another prior reference to the coming of the Branch is found in Psalm 132:17: “*There (Zion as stated in vs. 13), I will make the horn of David sprout; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.*” The horn of David (a reference to God’s Anointed) will “sprout”. The word “sprout” is in the Hebrew related to the word Branch in Isaiah 4:2 and has the meaning that God’s Anointed (the Messiah) will bring fruition to God’s plan for the future glory of Zion which is the context of the entire Psalm. Some may be tempted to accuse pre-millennialists of finding references to the Messiah behind every *tree* in the Old Testament Scriptures. To that the answer must be no, but certainly the Messiah is found behind every *branch*!

In that day the branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious:

Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15 describe the feet of those who bring good news as *beautiful*. The most *beautiful* feet of all who bring good news are those of the Messiah who not only brought good news but was the cause and reason for the good news. He Himself is the person of good news and is beautiful in all His attributes, works and in His divine being. Isaiah describes the beauty and glory of the Lord in chapter 28 vs. 5: “*In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people*” (ESV). See notes on Isaiah 28:5 of this study. Other references to the beauty and loveliness of God’s land and name include: Psalm 27:4, 96:6, 135:3; Isaiah 33:17 and in Daniel 8:9, 11:16, 11:41, 11:45. Selected references to the glorious nature of the Lord, His throne and name include: 1 Chronicles 29:13; Nehemiah 9:5; Psalm 72:19, 87:3, 145:5; Isaiah 3:8; 11:10, 63:14; Matthew 19:28, 25:31 and James 2:1. A study of the glory of the person, name and possessions of the Lord would be a wonderful undertaking for the student of God’s Word and this study of Isaiah is just too brief to give it the full value it deserves.

Victor Buksbazen comments on verse 2:

“Israel’s redemption will come through “the branch of the LORD,” in Hebrew “*Tsemah Jehovah,*” or sometimes “*Tsemah David.*” “*Tsemah*” means growth or vegetation in general, or a sprout, a plant, a branch. When used in conjunction with Jehovah or David, it has a Messianic connotation, and refers to the Messianic King who is a branch of the stem of Jesse (11:1).”

(Note: following this, Dr. Buksbazen quotes Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12 and Isaiah 11:1)

Dr. Buksbazen continues: “All “the Branch” prophecies have a strong Messianic content. “The Branch” is a rod of the stem of Jesse, that is a descendant of King David (Isa. 4:2, 11:1). His mission is to save Judah. This divinely appointed king-Messiah is referred to by Jeremiah as “the Branch of righteousness.” He is endowed with divinity, so that the prophet call Him “*Jehovah Tsidkenu*” – The LORD our Righteousness (Jer.23:5-6).

Zechariah calls Him “my servant the Branch” (Zech. 3:8) or the man whose name is “the Branch.”

Although there were a number of good kings in Israel since the days of Isaiah (Hezekiah, Josiah, Zedekiah) none of them came near the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of the Messianic King. It is therefore understandable that the earliest Jewish commentators always interpreted the term “Branch” as a reference to the Messiah. In fact one of the many rabbinic names for the Messiah is “*Tsemah*” – “branch.” The Hebrew prayer book is replete with references to the Messiah who is called “*Tsemah David*” – the Branch of David.

The ancient Chaldee paraphrase of Isaiah 4:2 translated “the Branch of Jehovah” as *Meshicha d’Jah*” – the Messiah of Jehovah. “In that day,” that is, when this prophecy shall be fulfilled, then shall “the Branch of Jehovah” (that is the Messiah) be beautiful and glorious in the eyes of redeemed Israel. “And the fruit of the land their pride and glory.” Here is an allusion to the dual nature of the Messiah: As “the Branch of the LORD,” He is of divine origin, as the “fruit of the land; He is also human. “Inscribed for life,” the Targum paraphrases as those who are written for “eternal life” (See also Ex. 32:32; Dan. 12:1; Rev. 13:8). (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, pages 126-127).

Vs. 2 of Isaiah 4 concludes with the description:
and the fruit of the land will be the pride and beauty of the survivors of Israel.

Regarding the phrase “fruit of the land”, David Cooper comments:

“Isaiah's prediction (of the Branch) is a Hebrew parallelism. A recognition of this fact gives us the proper clue to the correct interpretation. The phrase, *the Branch of the Lord*, therefore, refers to the divine nature of this coming ruler, whereas the parallel expression *fruit of the land* calls attention to His human nature. The prediction, therefore, foretells the time when the remnant of Israel which survives the purging judgments given in chapter two shall unanimously and enthusiastically accept its divine-human Ruler, Messiah.” (David L. Cooper, *Messianic Series: Messiah: His Nature and Person*, Page 216).

Isaiah's statement of "*the pride and beauty* (adornment, honor, excellence) *of the survivors of Israel*" would have been a stinging indictment against the people of Israel. Isaiah has just reminded these people that the Lord will remove their self-adorned "beauty" and their pride of place for their mighty ones will fall in battle and their gates will lament and mourn and they will sit on the ground, deserted. (Isaiah 3:24-26). Isaiah tells these prideful and self-exalting people that the Messiah, the Branch of the Lord will be coming "in that day" and He will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. This is a stark reminder to all who hear this message that the followers of the Messiah will exalt Him alone. Those who repent and follow the Lord will not be in the spotlight. They will not be the ones receiving accolades of glory nor will they be exalted on pedestals of importance. It will simply not be about them. It will be all about the exaltation, praise and worship of the Lord!

Thomas Constable comments:

"In a general sense "The Branch of the Lord" refers to Israel, but this is also a messianic title here as elsewhere (cf. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). It was regarded as a messianic reference here as early as the Targums, the Aramaic interpretive translation of the Old Testament that dates after the Babylonian exile or possible during it."⁷⁰

"[The branch is] a name of Christ, used in a fourfold way: (1) 'the branch of the LORD' (v. 2), i.e. the Immanuel character of Christ (Isa. 7:14) to be fully manifested to restored and converted Israel after His return in divine glory (Mt. 25:31); (2) 'the Branch' of David (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15), i.e. the Messiah, 'of the seed of David according to the flesh' (Rom. 1:3), revealed in His earthly glory as King of kings, and Lord of lords; (3) the LORD's 'servant, the Branch' (Zech. 3:8), Messiah's humiliation and obedience unto death according to Isa. 52:13-15; 53:1-12; Phil. 2:5-8; and (4) the 'man whose name is THE BRANCH' (Zech. 6:12), that is, His character as Son of man, the 'last Adam,' the 'second man' (1 Cor. 15:45-47), reigning as Priest-King over the earth in the dominion given to and lost by the first Adam. Matthew is the Gospel of the Branch of David; Mark, of the LORD's Servant, the Branch; Luke, of the Man whose name is the Branch; and John, of the Branch of the LORD."⁷¹ [Note 70: See Joyce G. Baldwin, "Semah as a Technical Term in the Prophets," *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964): 93-97. Note 71: The New Scofield Reference Bible, p. 716.] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, pages 31-32).

It is evident that God is preparing his people in the future for a dual blessing. *First*, the people and land will be transformed by the future actions of an anointed servant of God who will gloriously restore and fit Zion for His role as the messianic ruler on the earth and *second*, this ruler will have both a divine and human nature which points prophetically to the good news of the healing of salvation and justification that Isaiah will discuss later in his book. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

Following the phrase "*fruit of the land*," Isaiah adds "*will be the pride and beauty of the survivors of Israel*". The presence of the person and the accomplishments of the Messiah during the messianic kingdom will be a source of pride for the remnant of Israel who have survived the horrors of the great tribulation and have returned to Zion to live in peace. They shall be in the very center of the place of worship of the Lord on the earth.

Their beauty, (adornment, honor, excellence), will be their attachment to the Lord of Glory who reigns in splendor and wonder. It will be the same for these believing and born-again survivors as it is now for those who are believers and followers of Jesus Christ, as the Apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians 3:18: *“But we all, with unveiled faces reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit.”* Paul continues this thought in vs. 6 of the next chapter: *“For it is God who said, “Let there be light shining out of darkness,” who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

4:3 *Anyone who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who is recorded as among those living in Jerusalem.*

Those in Zion and Jerusalem who enter into the messianic kingdom will be called holy. For the chosen people, this is a realization of God’s statement recorded in Exodus 19:6: *“You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* and in Leviticus 11:44: *“For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy because I am holy.”* The Apostle Peter referenced these verses in his first Letter in 1 Peter 1:16 (Lev. 11:44) and 1 Peter 2:9 (Ex. 19:6). Those who are called holy in the messianic kingdom will not need, as required in Exodus and Leviticus, to keep the Mosaic law with perfect obedience, but will be called holy because they will be believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and will be living together with Him.

The phrase: *“everyone who is recorded as among those living in Jerusalem”* must refer to the book of life that is mentioned several times in Scripture. Moses, when contenting with God over the sins of the people of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, spoke of the book God had written. God responded by saying, *“Whoever has sinned against me, that person alone will I blot out of my book.”* (Exod. 32:32-33). This may be a reference to an actual book or a metaphor for God who keeps an accurate account of all deeds performed by all people on the earth. The fact that God’s book is mentioned throughout the Bible from Exodus to Revelation is not to be taken lightly and if the Bible is understood in its plain sense, then it is not unreasonable to understand that God indeed has books that he keeps.

Ultimately, those who will appear before the great white throne for judgment will be judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.” Rev. 20:12. One of the books mentioned in Revelation chapter 20 is the “book of life”. This is likely the same book as Isaiah mentions as “recorded for life” in Isaiah 4:3. References to the “book of life” in Scripture include: Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 20:15 and the “Lamb’s book of life” Revelation 21:27. Other likely references to the same book: Psalm 56:8, 139:16; Daniel 7:10, 12:1 and Malachi 3:16.

4:4 *Then the Lord will wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and will purge the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of fire.*

Isaiah in this verse states the time when the survivors of Israel will be called holy. It will be following the washing away by the Lord of the filth of the daughters of Zion and after Jerusalem has been purged of its bloodshed by “*the spirit of judgment and the spirit of fire*”. This undoubtedly refers to “*the time of Jacob's trouble; but he will be saved out of it.*” Jeremiah 30:7. This time is called the great tribulation: Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14. Isaiah is announcing a prophecy regarding the period of time just prior to the commencement of the messianic kingdom which will be a time of judgment on the wicked of the world and a time of trial for Israel. During this time, God will remove the wicked from the earth and prepare the survivors or remnant of the people of Israel for service during the coming millennial kingdom. The events of the tribulation period will be governed and ordered by God who is sovereign over His world. The Old Testament prophets, as they were given inspiration to write from God, spoke about this time. The New Testament writers, also inspired from God, provided more information and it is in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, that the most details regarding these days are provided. However, all of God’s Word must be studied to fully understand the events and outcomes of this period of time. A highly-recommended resource for a study of this period of time is: *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Publisher: Ariel Ministries, 2004.

4:5-6 *The LORD will create over the entirety of Mount Zion, and over her sites of assembly, a cloud and smoke by day, and a glowing flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy.⁶ There will be a shelter for shade in the day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.*

Following the terrible days of the tribulation period the Lord will create over the whole area of Mount Zion. The NKJV translates these verses as:

“Then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion and above her assemblies, a cloud of smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.”

This prophecy of the millennial kingdom, is reminiscent of the Shekinah glory which is promised to fill the house (temple of God) which will exist during the messianic kingdom as stated in Ezekiel 43:2-5. It is also reminiscent of the protection God gave to the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings after God rescued them from their captivity in Egypt. It seems that the Messiah, during the duration of the messianic kingdom, will constantly remind His people about His miraculous actions in the past which were designed by Him to evoke praise and worship to the glory of His great name.

The words “dwelling place” (NKJV), (Isaiah 4:5) is the Hebrew word *makown*, which has the meaning of “an established place.” It is first mentioned in the Scriptures in the Song of Moses, Exodus 15:17: “*You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which You have made for Your own **dwelling**, the sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have established.*” (NKJV). (bold added). This prophecy by Moses is a majestic description of the promised kingdom of the Messiah in which the dwelling place of God’s own creation will be a sanctuary among His people. This “sanctuary” will be the tabernacle of God (Isaiah 4:6) in which He will dwell with His people. The word “tabernacle” (NKJV), (Isaiah 4:6) is the Hebrew word *sukka* and is the word for the feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23: 33-43 which will be celebrated during the millennial reign of the Messiah as described in Zechariah 14:16-19. The re-establishment of the tabernacle during the messianic kingdom is beautifully prophesized in Amos 9:11: “*On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old.*” (NKJV). The portrayal of God dwelling with the saints forever is recorded in Revelation 21:3: “*Then I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look, the dwelling place of God is among humankind. He will live with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them.*” The words “dwelling place” in Revelation 21:3 is the Greek *skene*, which is often translated in the New Testament as “tabernacle.”

For the people who heard Isaiah proclaim this message, it would be news of hope dependent upon their repentance from their pride and self-exaltation. If they repented and chose their true pride and adornment in their Messiah (the Branch of the Lord) rather than exalt themselves in their self-pride and useless trinkets of adornment, they would look forward in joyous anticipation to the coming day when their Lord would rule among them on Mount Zion.

Gary V. Smith comments on verses 5-6:

After Zion is purified, God will create something new in Zion. The use of “create” (*bārā'*) suggests that this activity is parallel to Isaiah’s later elaborations on God’s special act of re-creating the new heaven and the new earth (65:17; 66:22) at some point in the eschatological era. One of the primary new factors in that kingdom will be the glorious presence of God himself. The cloud by day and the fire by night symbolize his presence in Zion. Isaiah draws these images from the Exodus tradition, where God’s presence was known through the cloud and fire that led the Israelites out of Egypt and eventually dwelt in the tabernacle and temple (Exod 13:21–22; 14:19, 24; 40:34; Deut 1:33; 31:15; 1 Kgs 8:10–11). The divine presence demonstrates God’s acceptance and nearness to his holy people. The surprising difference is that God’s presence will not be limited to a temple building; it will be like a canopy over the whole of Zion (cf. 60:1–2; 62:2; Ezek 39:25–29), because all of Zion and its people will be holy. The canopy (4:5 *sukkâ*) is sometimes associated with weddings in Hebrew culture (Ps 19:6; Joel 2:16), but its function here seems to point to the divine protection of all the holy people in Zion. God’s glory is imaginatively pictured as a shelter or refuge from the harshness of the weather. These symbols represent any danger that might threaten the people of God. God is there to care for and to protect his people. (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1, pages 158-159).

Teaching Outline: Isaiah 4:2-6

4:2 The Beautiful and Glorious Person who will rule the Kingdom

4:3 The Holy Survivors of the People who will enter the Kingdom

4:4 The Sins of the Kingdom's People Purged

4:5-6 The Security of the Kingdom's Palace Provided

5. The Parable of the Vineyard: 5:1-7

Introduction: 5:1-7

Although being in the form of a song, parable or teaching story, it is a portrait of God's prior, care and protection for His chosen people. Yet God laments that His care for His people did not result in their fruitfulness that He expected. The people did not respond with joy, holiness, justice and righteousness. They instead rebelled against God and continually committed acts of bloodshed and unrighteousness. As told in a parable about a vineyard, God expected a yield of good grapes but received only worthless grapes. The result of Israel's failure to yield "good grapes" would be the removal of God's care and protection for them resulting in their land being trampled and consumed by their enemies. In and of itself, the parable offers no hope of redemption to Israel but only judgment. Such hope will only come in later proclamations by the prophet.

Of this section, Thomas Constable writes:

"This is the third and last of Isaiah's introductory oracles. The first one (ch.1) introduced the book as a whole by presenting major themes with which the prophet proceeded to deal in chapters 2-66. The second, chiastic one (chs.2-4), presented the tension between what God intended Israel to be, and what she had become. This third prophetic sermon (ch.5) was a clever presentation of the present condition of Israel in Isaiah's day and its consequences. It starts out deceptively as a casual song, transforms into a courtroom drama, and ends with pure condemnation. Isaiah lured his listeners into hearing him with a sweet song and then proceeded to burn them with fiery preaching."

The Song of the vineyard 5:1-7

"Isaiah, like a folk singer, sang a parable about a vineyard that compared Israel to a vineyard that Yahweh had planted and from which He legitimately expected to receive fruit. One cannot help but wonder if this passage lay behind Jesus' teaching on the vine and the branches in John 15:1-6. The prophet's original audience did not realize what this song was about at first. It started out sounding like a happy wedding song, but it turned out to be a funeral dirge announcing Israel's death. This chiastic "song" is only the first part of Isaiah's unified message in this chapter. His song flowed into a sermon. This is the first of several songs in Isaiah (cf. chs. 12, 35; 54:1-10; et al.)." (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 34).

5:1 *Let me sing for my beloved
a song about his vineyard.
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.*

The prophet begins his “song” by declaring that it is about his “beloved” or well-beloved without revealing who this one is. The revelation of who this one is comes at the end of the song or parable as recorded in vs. 7. The revelation of the owner of the vineyard is a dramatic literary and theatrical device designed to have the greatest impact on those who first heard this song or on those who first read it. The use of a vineyard as a metaphor would have been commonly understood in the agriculturally dependent economy of ancient Judah. Noah was the first recorded person to plant a vineyard: Genesis 9:20. Moses often made mention of a vineyard and used the vineyard as a symbol of judgment on the people of Israel if they were disobedient to God: Deuteronomy 28:30 and 39. Moses declares the severe consequences of their disobedience in Deuteronomy 28:45-46: *“Then all these curses will come on, pursue and overtake you, till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he has given you. These curses will be a sign and a wonder against you and your descendants forever.”*

Isaiah mentions the vineyard as a very important sign of God’s judgment or blessing of His people: 1:8; 3:14; 5:1-7; 5:10; 16:10; 27:2; 36:17; 37:30 and 65:21. In 27:2 Isaiah again mentions singing about a vineyard in another metaphor about God’s care and blessings of His people in the portrayal of His people as His vineyard: Isaiah 27:2-6. In the parable recorded in Isaiah chapter 27, God’s people, “in that day” (27:2), will take root, blossom, sprout and fill the whole world with fruit. (27:6).

Other prophets also use the vineyard in terms of judgment or blessing: Jeremiah 12:10; 31:5; 32:15; 35:7, 9; 39:10; Ezekiel 19:10; 28:26; Hosea 2:15; Amos 4:9; 5:11, 17; 9:14; Micah 1:6 and Zephaniah 1:13. Solomon used the vineyard as a metaphor to represent his love as recorded in Song of Solomon 1:6, 14; 2:15; 7:12 and 8:11-12. Solomon also mentions a vineyard in Ecclesiastes 2:4 and in Proverbs 24:30 as does Lemuel in Proverbs 31:16. The psalmist mentions the planting of a vineyard with results similar to Isaiah 5:1-7: Psalm 80:8-13 and a blessing: Psalm 107:37. Jesus recognized the importance of the vineyard in the lives of the people of Israel and may have had Isaiah’s song in mind when he spoke the parable of the owner (God) of the vineyard and his son (Jesus Christ) as recorded in Matthew 21:33-46. See also Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19.

Isaiah, further in vs. 1, stated the soil conditions or context of the planting of the vineyard by his “well-beloved”. This vineyard was located on a fertile hill. As an obvious song-parable about how the Lord prepared for the development of His chosen people to produce fruit for Him, Isaiah leaves no doubt as to the care God took in this development. As vs. 7 will reveal, the people had no one to blame but themselves for their unproductiveness in fulfilling God’s intended plans for them.

5:2 *He cultivated it, cleared out its stones,
and planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in the midst of it,
and also hewed out a winepress in it.
He expected that it would produce grapes,
but it yielded only sour grapes.*

Isaiah continues the song-parable about the vineyard of his “well-beloved” by declaring the great care this one took in digging the soil for preparation of planting; by removing the stones from the ground; by planting the choicest or best of vines; by building a tower (for protection from animal and human enemies) in the midst of the vineyard; and by hewing (cutting) out a wine vat (wine press) in expectation that the vineyard would produce good grapes. Isaiah then reveals the tragic result that instead of good grapes it only produced worthless ones. The Hebrew word for “sour” is *beushim* which literally means “stinking.” God would be offended by the stench of these stinking grapes.

Although this is a song-parable it does raise an interesting issue of tension between God’s omniscience (all knowing) and His consequent actions of performing a work even if He knew beforehand how this work will turn out. It is similar to God’s work in creating the world. He knew beforehand how His creation would be defiled by the sin of man although He pronounced the results of His creative activity as being “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Throughout the Scriptures this tension exists between God’s sovereign work, His elective decrees, His purposes in predestination and choosing those who will have an everlasting relationship with Him in heaven and between humans who bear the responsibility for their own actions and choices, even to choose to honor God. The Apostle Paul declares that humans are “without excuse” (Romans 1:20-21) for even though they knew Him, they refused to honor Him. For an extended discussion on this issue: the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, consult the theology texts mentioned in the resources for this study.

The tension in Isaiah’s song-parable is that we as students of the Scriptures understand that God knew just how the Jewish people would respond to all His work in preparing them for His service to produce “fruit” (justice and righteousness: vs. 7) for Him and that His people failed in their responsibilities to God. Yet God with His prior-knowledge began and completed His work and preparation of His chosen people. One response to this tension is that in a future day God’s work and preparation will yield the results He intended as the reference to Isaiah 27:2-6 mentioned above demonstrates. For Isaiah’s day, the results of God’s work and preparation had not yet yielded the results He sought. One of the major themes of Isaiah is that God has been and continues to cultivate and prepare a remnant of the people who will respond to Him in faith and obedience. The sad reality of humanity is that so many of God’s created beings will not respond to Him in trust for their eternal salvation but will suffer the consequences of their own evil choices and actions. Yet we must rejoice in that there will be uncounted numbers of human beings (from our finite perspective) who will choose God in faith and will enjoy His presence forever. God makes it evident to everyone specific and detailed knowledge about Him (Romans 1:19-20) so they can choose to have faith in Him and honor Him as God.

5:3 *Now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.*

God calls upon His people living in Jerusalem and Judah to be a judge (to discern) the truth between Himself and His vineyard. Students of Scripture will notice that the speaker in vs. 3 is no longer Isaiah but the Lord. The Lord now continues the narrative of the parable in order to explain its intended meaning and to guide His people into comprehending their responsibility for their own failure to produce the fruit of justice and righteousness. For a discussion of the likely time frame when Isaiah delivered this song-parable to the people of Judah and Jerusalem refer to: Gary V. Smith, Isaiah, volume 1, pages 159-164.

5:4 *What more could I have done to my vineyard
than I have not already done for it?
When I expected that it would produce grapes,
why did it yield only sour grapes?*

God next requests that His people answer His question about His work and preparation in preparing His vineyard for its expected harvest of good grapes. God asks: What more could He have done? It is a rhetorical question for the obvious answer is that God not have done any more to His vineyard nor could He have cared for it any better than He has already done. Up to this point those hearing this song-parable for the first time would have been wondering why a vineyard so carefully prepared would have failed to produce good grapes and only produced stinking grapes; (see notes on vs.2). What was the reason? Perhaps the prophet will reveal it to them. In the meantime, God declares (verses 5-6) what He will do because of the failure of His vineyard to produce good grapes. The prophet Nathan delivered a story- message to king David, 2 Samuel 12:1-15, following the tragic results of David's sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, resulting in the death of Uriah. The story-message from Nathan prompted a judgmental response from David without David realizing that the story in the message was really about himself. Isaiah presents a similar song-parable for the people of Judah who to this point do not yet realize the message of the story of the vineyard is really about their relationship with God.

5:5 *Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge,
and it will be eaten up;
I will break down its wall,
and it will be trampled down.*

God startles His audience with His decision of what He will do with His vineyard. It must be remembered that this "vineyard" and everything in creation belongs to God. The created order is for God to do whatever He deems or desires to with it, for it and to it. It is created for Him. God's sovereignty, regarding His people Israel, is expressed powerfully in Romans chapters 9-11.

In summing up these great theological teachings about God's sole right and choice to do and accomplish only what He desires in these three chapters in Romans, the Apostle Paul declares in one of the most glorious doxologies in Scripture, Romans 11:33-36:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!

*How unsearchable are his judgments,
and how unfathomable are his ways!*

³⁴ *For who has known the mind of the Lord?*

Or who has been his counselor?

³⁵ *Or who has first given to God,
so that he is obligated to repay him?*

³⁶ *For from him, and through him, and to him, are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.*

God does not ask permission from anyone regarding His vineyard. He simply declares in His sovereign right what He will now do with this mass of worthless stinking grapes. *First*, He states He will remove its hedge with the result that it will be consumed. The Hebrew word for "eaten" (consumed) is *baar* which has the primary meaning of burning, kindling and to completely sweep away. The judgment of God on His people is likened to a tongue of fire consuming stubble is mentioned in vs. 24.

Second, God declares in His judgment on His vineyard that He will break down the protective wall He had built around it, likely from the stones and rocks He had removed from the ground. The result of this action is that the entire vineyard will be open and vulnerable and God declares it will be trampled. The meaning here is that God will remove His protection from His chosen people and their nation so that they will be left to be over-run and destroyed by a foreign nation as the prophet declared will happen to them in judgment in verses 26-30. God will use a "distant nation" to be His instrument to bring this judgment upon His people. See notes on vs. 26 for an expanded discussion on God's methods and the instruments He uses to accomplish His actions of judgment.

5:6 *I will make it a wasteland;
it will not be pruned or hoed;
instead, briars and thorns will come up.
I will also command the clouds
that they not shower any rain on it.*

In His third statement of judgment on His vineyard, God states that He will lay it waste. It is God's prerogative to make the work of His hands a wasteland. The Hebrew word for "wasteland" (waste) is *bathah* meaning an end or destruction. God has previously warned that He would lay waste to the land of His chosen people if they forsook His covenant and served other gods. Deuteronomy 29:22-29. See also Leviticus 26:14-33. Isaiah also mentions this land will be laid waste in 5:17; and the earth will be made waste: 24:1, 3; and 42:15. However in a future time God will restore the waste places: 49:19; 51:3 and 52:9.

Fourth, God will no longer cultivate the land and remove its weeds (pruned and hoed). As a result, briars and thorns will arise. The metaphor of comparing the judgment of God to briars is a common literary device of Isaiah. See 7:23-24; 9:18; and 10:17. Briars are mentioned in the sense of blessing in 27:4 and 32:13 (thistles). Fifth, God will withhold the rain so the vineyard will receive no water and therefore it will dry up. God had previously warned His people not to turn away and serve other gods for if they did: *“Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will not produce its fruit; and you will quickly perish from the good land that the LORD is giving you.”* (Deuteronomy 11:17). See also 1 Kings 8:35-36; 1 Kings chapter 17; 2 Chronicles 6:26-27; 7:13-14; Jeremiah 3:3; 14:4; Ezekiel 22:24; Amos 4:7; Zechariah 14:17-18; and James 5:17-18.

5:7 *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah is his cherished plant.
He expected justice,
but got only oppression;
hoped for righteousness,
but heard only cries for help.*

At the end of the song-parable, the Lord reveals that the vineyard is a metaphor for God’s chosen people, the house of Israel and the people of Judah. They were intended to be His delightful plant but the song-parable reveals that they instead turned out to be stinking and worthless. Students of the Scriptures should note the impact of Isaiah’s choice of words being two pairs of alliterations. In the English NASB version, the last half of vs. 7 states: *“Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold a cry of distress.”* The first pair of alliteration is: justice versus bloodshed. In the Hebrew, justice is *mishpath* and bloodshed is *mispach* (*mishpath – mispach*). The second pair of alliteration is: righteousness versus a cry of distress. In the Hebrew, righteousness is *tsedakah* and cry of distress is *tseakah* (*tsedakah – tseakah*). When these words are spoken in Hebrew, the powerful effect of their obvious alliteration becomes evident to those hearing the message.

Teaching Outline: Isaiah 5:1-7

- 5:1-2 The Rationale of God’s Care and Protection
- 5:3-4 The Results of God’s Care and Protection
- 5:5-6 The Removal of God’s Care and Protection
- 5:7 The Repudiation of God’s Care and Protection

Introduction: Isaiah 5:8-30

Following the parable of the vineyard, Isaiah continues his scathing message, that due to their horrific sins, their remains no hope of safety or longevity in the land for the Jewish people. The section 5:8-30 is a pronouncement of several woes that are coming. The people will go into exile and Jerusalem’s splendor will descend into Sheol (vs. 14); *“but the LORD of hosts will be exalted by justice”* (vs.16). The theme of this section is the obvious contrast between the fall of the sinful people contrasted with the exaltation of their holy God.

In this section, several woes are pronounced on the Jewish people and several results, introduced by “therefore”, “but” and “on this account”, are announced. There are six specific declarations of woes: 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21 and 22. A suggested outline of this section highlights God’s solemn statement of woes and the resulting judgments. A striking example is declared by the prophet Hosea speaks to the plight of the Jewish nation as recorded in Hosea 8:7:

*For they sow the wind,
and they will reap the whirlwind.
The stalks do not have heads of grain;
it will not yield meal;
even if it did yield grain,
foreigners would swallow it up.*

Outline of Isaiah 5:8-30

- 5:8-12: Woes: (1) material self-indulgence: 5:8-10; (2) drunken self-indulgence: 5:11-12.
- 5:13-15 Judgment announced
- 5:16-17 The Lord exalted in judgment / The land exploited in judgment
- 5:18-23 Woes: (3) mocking God: 5:18-19; (4) calling evil good: 5:20; (5) declaring themselves wise: 5:21 and (6) corrupt drunkards: 5:22-23
- 5:24-30 Judgment announced

There is much literary evidence to connect 5:1-7 with 5:8-30. Isaiah uses similar themes and repeats several verbal roots. See Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1 page 170. Isaiah, in 5:8-30, reveals why God is justified in condemning the Jewish people for their failure to produce the fruit God expected. The six woes are laments for specific sins that have been continually committed. A most egregious set of sins is stated in verses 18-19. There the people are so tied to iniquity and falsehood, they sin as if they are dragging their evil ways with them with strong cords like cart ropes. If this is not wicked enough, they taunt God to show them the judgment Isaiah has been speaking about. They are saying, they will believe it only when they see it. Paul in Galatians 6:7 aptly summarizes their attitude: “Be not deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever a person sows, that will he also reap.” The warnings of Scripture do not stand alone. As in Hosea 8:7 and Galatians 6:7 so in Isaiah chapter 5, the harvest of sowing evil is to reap ruin and destruction.

5:8 *Woe to those who accumulate house after house,
that acquire field after field
until there is no room left,
until you are left to dwell alone in the midst of the land!*

The *first* lament of woe, verses 8-10 regards the sin of the self-indulgent rich who buy up houses and land for their own selfish desires and thus leave no land for the poor to use. God had decreed that the land belonged solely to Him and it was not to be sold permanently. Also, God had set rules for poor relatives (kinsmen) who because of poverty had sold their land and their nearest kinsman was required to buy the land back for this poorer relative. There were also rules regarding the sale of a residence within a walled city and those in villages without walls. Houses in villages had redemption rights had to revert to the original owner in jubilee years. Levites enjoyed a permanent right of redemption for their houses but their pasture fields were not to be sold for God gave it to them as their permanent possession. See Leviticus 25:23-34 for these redemption laws. Laws of inheritance are declared in Numbers 27:1-11. An example of coveted land (king Ahab and his neighbor Naboth) and its consequences is recorded in 1 Kings chapter 21. The prophet Micah, as recorded in Micah 2:2 also declared an oracle of woe on those who covet and seize fields and houses. See the greater context in Micah 2:1-11. The prophet Amos declares God's judgment on similar circumstances in Amos 2:6-8.

5:9-10 *In my ears the LORD of hosts said,
"Of a truth many houses will be desolate,
even large and beautiful mansions
will be left without inhabitant."*

¹⁰ *For ten acres of vineyard will produce only six gallons of wine,
and six bushels of seed will produce less than a bushel of grain.*

God spoke directly to Isaiah, "in my ears" regarding the judgment on the rich who had acquired houses and land in violation of His laws. First, their houses will be left desolate and without occupants. Second, their land would not yield its expected harvest. God said ten acres of vineyard would only yield six gallons (a bath) of wine and six bushels (a homer) of seed would only produce about half a bushel (an ephah) of grain. Not only would the houses of the rich be empty but their lands would produce an empty harvest. This judgment coincides with the songparable of the vineyard, verses 1-7 and Isaiah in these later verses is giving the details of why God's vineyard did not produce its expected good fruit but only rotten stinking and worthless fruit.

5:11-12 *Woe to those who rise up early in the morning
so that they may pursue strong drink;
who stay up late into the night,
until they are inflamed with wine!*

¹² *Their parties have the harp and lute,
the tambourine, flute, and wine.
They have no respect for the deeds of the LORD,
or consider the work of his hands.*

The *second* lament of woe, 5:11-12 is against those who are self-indulgent by continually becoming so inflamed with alcohol, rising early to pursue strong drink and stay up late in the evening to become inflamed with wine. They also held lavish banquets including many musical instruments and wine but they did not remember and honor God's many deeds (accomplishments) or consider the works of God hands on their behalf. They had forgotten one of the most solemn confessions of faith, the Shema, recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. They also had forgotten that Deuteronomy chapter 6 contains this awful reminder in vs. 15: "*For the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God and the anger of the LORD your God may be sparked against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.*"

- 5:13-17** *Therefore my people will go into exile
for lack of knowledge;
their nobles will lack food,
and their crowds parched with thirst.*
- ¹⁴ *Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat
and opened its mouth without limit.
Their famous ones and their multitude,
with their boisterous revelers will descend into it.*
- ¹⁵ *Each person will be on their face,
each one brought down,
and the haughty eyes humbled.*
- ¹⁶ *But the LORD of hosts will be exalted by justice,
and God the Holy One will demonstrate his holiness
by righteousness.*
- ¹⁷ *Then will the lambs feed as in their own pasture,
and the fatlings graze among the ruins.*

Because of these sins, verses 8-12, God announces a particularly stinging and horrendous set of punishments (verses 13-17). *First*, the people will go into exile: banishment from the land. This is a direct prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in which the city will lie in ruins (vs. 17) and the inhabitants will be taken as captives and exiles to Babylon. If this message was delivered by Isaiah in 740 B.C., it stands as a most significant prophecy which was fulfilled in 586 B.C. An earlier deportation of Jews from Judah to Babylon occurred in 605 and 597 B.C. but the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the removal of most of its inhabitants occurred in 586 B.C. Daniel and his three friends, who were among the prominent young men who were taken captive to Babylon in 605 B.C. The prophet Ezekiel was also one of the prominent young men to be taken into exile in 597 B.C.

Earlier than these most significant dates for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of her citizens was, *first*, the events of the Syro-Ephramite war, 734-732 B.C. King Ahaz of Judah had refused to join king Rezin of Damascus and king Pekah of Israel in a proposed three-nation alliance to repel the advancing Assyrian threat against their nations. Following the refusal of

Ahaz to join forces with Damascus (Syria) and Israel (Ephraim), these kings led their armies to invade Judah and it is recorded in 2 Chronicles 28:5-15 that this invasion resulted in the deaths of 120,000 soldiers of Judah. Also, 200,000 women and children were taken captive into Samaria. Later they were returned to Judah through the intervention of the prophet Obed. One of the goals of the Syro-Ephramite alliance was to remove king Ahaz and replace him with a king of their choice (Isaiah 7:1-6), thus threatening to end the lineage of Davidic kings upon the throne of Judah. 2 Chronicles 28:5 also reveals God's judgment on king Ahaz: "*Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Aram, and they defeated him, and carried away captive many of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with heavy casualties.*"

The result of this devastating war was the fear of the complete destruction of the land of Judah and the City of Jerusalem by its evil king Ahaz. The evilness of Ahaz is catalogued in 2 Chronicles 28:1-4. Instead of turning to God for aid against the Syro-Ephramite alliance, king Ahaz requested help from Assyria, 2 Chronicles 28:16-21. This rebellion against God by seeking help from a pagan nation resulted in further disaster for King Ahaz and Judah. See also 2 Kings 16: 1-20 for additional details of the evil life of King Ahaz and its consequences.

A *second* earlier event was the conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) by Assyria and the removal of its people into exile into lands controlled by Assyria in 722-721 B.C. The Biblical account of this conquest and exile is given in 2 Kings 17:1-18. King Hoshea of Israel had rebelled against the king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, by seeking aid from Egypt and by refusing to pay tribute to the king. King Shalmaneser as a result of Hoshea's actions brought his armies to besiege the kingdom of Israel and after a three-year period of assault, the armies of Assyria completely conquered Israel and took captive its people to various parts of the Assyrian empire. As with the assault by Syria and Ephraim and later Assyria on Judah, God was the divine mover of the events that led to the complete destruction of Israel, (2 Kings 17:18). See 2 Kings 17:19-41 for the events that followed the destruction of the nation of Israel.

The people of Judah were not ignorant of these events. They brought great fear and dread to them. But they were not moved by these events to repent of their evilness and rebellion against God. They constantly mocked God by worshipping idols and seeking the help of pagan nations instead of in humble repentance for their sinfulness, seeking God for protection. Finally, God was to do something that the people of Judah would not believe. God was to use Babylon as His agent to demolish Jerusalem and its temple and to take its people into exile as Isaiah 5:13 predicts.

As recorded in Isaiah 5:13-17, the *second* set of punishments recorded by Isaiah is that they will suffer from famine and thirst: punishment for their abuse of the land. *Third*, many, including the famous ones and those who are boisterous revelers will descend to Sheol (may be a double reference to the grave and to hell): which is permanent banishment from the earth as punishment for their rebellion against God. *Fourth*, the common, the important and the proud will all suffer the same fate of being humbled and abased as punishment for exalting themselves before God.

Fifth, the land will be used or exploited for food only by grazing animals as punishment for their selfish acquisition of land and properties. The vulnerable and defenseless lambs will graze in these pastures that the rich had so coveted for their own use. The NKJV adds in vs. 17, that strangers will eat in the waste places (literally “the fat”) of the land that the rich would not be permitted to reap its harvest.

The central and most critical message in this section is the contrast between verses 15 and 16. The people because of their unrelenting sinfulness will be brought down (vs. 15) but God (the Lord of hosts) will be exalted in judgment (vs. 16). The ultimate result of this contrast is stated in the latter half of vs. 16: “*God the Holy One will demonstrate his holiness by righteousness*”. The people have shown themselves evil in their unrighteousness. The twice repeated usage of holy in this verse points to its double meaning: God who in Himself is holy also shows that His righteous acts demonstrate that He is holy. He is altogether holy and all his actions are holy.

5:18-19 *Woe to those who drag iniquity with cords of falsehood,
and sin along like with a cart rope.*

¹⁹ *Who say, "Make him hurry up,
let him do his work quickly,
so that we may see it.*

*Let the plan of the Holy One of Israel happen soon,
so that we may experience it!"*

The *third* lament of woe involved two very vile actions. The first was that they had been so captivated by their self-centeredness in thinking only of themselves and choosing to forget and reject God that they “*drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood.*” “Falsehood” is the Hebrew word *shav* which has the meaning of emptiness, vanity and deceitfulness. The picture the prophet reveals here is that the people of Judah and Jerusalem have so immersed themselves with their deceitful and worthless vanity that they are bound to their sin with strong cords just as with the same type of cords with which they use for their animals to pull their carts. God has given them up to be bound by their own cords of sin.

The second sinful action in verses 18-19 is far worse. The people had removed any influence of God on their lives and solely relied on their own corrupt immoral consciousness. They had no concept of holiness which God had demanded: “*be holy because I am holy.*” Leviticus 11:44. They mockingly demanded of Isaiah that God quickly show His works to them so they could “see it” or discern it. They would not believe in God and His works (plans and purposes) for His people unless they could see it with their own eyes and then decide if they would even then believe in God.

5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good,
and good evil;
who turn darkness to light,
and light to darkness;
who swap bitter for sweet,
and sweet for bitter!*

The *fourth* lament of woe was very contemptuous in the eyes of God. Those in Israel who called evil good and called good evil were a preview of the evilness of the Pharisees who blasphemed the Holy Spirit as recorded in Matthew 12:22-37. The Pharisees declared that the works of Jesus were the actions of the devil (Beelzebul) the ruler of demons. Jesus declared their words to be a sin for which there is no forgiveness for they spoke against the Holy Spirit. Jesus ended His warning to these hypocritical religious leaders by stating: “*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*” Matthew 12:37. These certainly would have been applicable words of warning for the people of Judah in Isaiah’s day.

5:21 *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
And shrewd in their own site!*

The *fifth* lament of woe speaks against those who “are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. They are conceited in their view of what they know but, in reality are fools. Proverbs 26:12 is applicable to this situation: “*Do you see a person wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*” The first sin of humans was due to Adam and Eve falling to the temptation to be wise and be like God knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:1-7). The words of Solomon in Proverbs contain many warnings about the folly of being wise in one’s own eyes: Proverbs 3:7, 12:15, 26:5, 26:16 and 28:11.

5:22-23 *Woe to those who are champions at drinking wine,
and valiant at mixing strong drinks,
²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deny the innocent justice!*

The *sixth* and final lament of woe is about a set of sinful actions that lead to serious consequences. The first action concerns those who are “heroes in drinking wine” and valiant in “mixing strong drink”. Isaiah is not commending these people but sarcastically calling them heroes and valiant as an obvious rebuke on their corrupted habits. The result of this corruption is that they give a bribe to the wicked to justify their wicked actions and this set of sins leads to the taking away of the “*righteousness of the righteous*” (KJV). The result of this set of sins is stated in Psalm 34:21: “*Evil will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.*” King David as recorded in Psalm 69 prayed for protection from his enemies and asked: “*Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be listed with the righteous.*” Psalm 69:28.

Introduction: Isaiah 5:24-30

Following the six oracles or laments of woe against his people, Isaiah begins a declaration of God's judgment on them with the connecting word "therefore". God's judgment is decisive, deliberate and devastating. There will be no escape. They will be destroyed as fire destroys stubble and dry grass (vs. 24). God's anger has burned against His people and He has struck them down with the power that makes the mountains shake (vs. 25). Finally, God will bring a great military force from a distant nation to complete their destruction (verses 26-30). The reason stated by God is given in vs. 24: they have rejected God's law and despised His word.

*5:24 Therefore, just as the tongue of fire devours straw,
and as the dry grass shrivels in the flame,
so their root will become rotten
and their blossom will blow away like dust,
because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

The declaration of judgment on God's people begins with "therefore" which includes the whole collection of evil actions in 5:8-23 that prove that the people have rebelled against God and have mocked Him and have treated righteousness with contempt leading in verses 24-30 to God's just and holy punishment against them. The judgment mentioned in vs. 24 is the *first* of three God has decreed. Just as God had stated earlier in the vineyard song-parable (5:7) that He will remove the hedge and it will be consumed (burned, kindled) so vs. 24 connects His judgment with the vineyard song-parable and expands on this fiery consummation. The people will themselves be consumed in like manner as God's hedge and become like fragile and helpless plants that will be completely destroyed.

God gives an immediate reason for this judgment. The people have "*rejected the law of the LORD of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*" The word "law" in the Hebrew is *torah* and refers to the entire law of God recorded in Genesis to Deuteronomy. Their action of also despising God's word is a parallel evil to rejecting the law. It is highly significant that God's titles: the LORD of hosts and the Holy One of Israel are stated in this context. It is not just the law and word recorded by Moses that is being maligned. God's people have rejected and despised the law and word of the Most High God who is almighty who leads the armies of heaven and earth. He also is the Holy God who is holy in His relationship to Israel as well as to the entirety of His creation. To shun and neglect His word and law is to reject and despise the great Creator of the heavens and the earth. There is no One higher, or more exalted, or more mighty, or more holy than God who has chosen Israel not because they were more numerous than other peoples but because He first loved them and He remembers His oath (covenant) that He had sworn to their forefathers. See expanded explanation in Deuteronomy 7:6-11. God told Moses that His people would rebel against Him and turn to idols and forsake Him and break His covenant. As a result, God said His anger would be kindled against them...and they will be consumed. See greater context of this amazing revelation from God in Deuteronomy 31:14-22 and the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1-43.

5:25 *Therefore the anger of the LORD burns against his people;
 he has stretched out his hand against them,
 and has struck them.
 The mountains tremble,
 and their corpses are strewn like garbage in the streets.
 After all this, his anger is not turned away,
 but his hand is still stretched out.*

The *second* of three judgments declared by God against His people is stated in vs. 25. God's burning anger against His people and He has struck them and their corpses lie like refuse in the streets. His anger caused the very mountains to shake Gary V. Smith, Isaiah Vol. 1, page 180, notes that this judgment is given in the past tense and may refer to a great earthquake that occurred in approximately 765-760 B.C. that is mentioned by the prophet Amos in his prophecy: Amos 1:1, 6:11; 8:8 and 9:1. Smith's commentary on Amos is suggested as a recommended resource to understand the background to this event: Gary V. Smith, Amos, A Mentor Commentary, 1989; Christian Focus/Mentor Publications. Vs. 25 concludes that God is still angry with His people and His hand of judgement is still stretched out against them. God, in His holy and just judgment, has decreed that these people will face elimination by fire and earthquake but He is not through. God has another stunning announcement for His anger is not yet spent. God will do something these sinful and rebellious people would not expect. An overwhelming scourge ("overflowing whip" in the DASV), will come to finish His punishment upon them. (Isaiah 28:15,18).

5:26 *He will send the signal to a distant nation,
 and will whistle for them to come from the ends of the earth.
 Look, they come with speed and swiftness.*

The *third* of three judgments is declared by God against His people in verses 26-30. This specific judgment was something the people of God would not have expected. Because of God's covenants which he swore with their forefathers (He reminded them of this in Deuteronomy 7:6-11), and because they were God's chosen people because of His love for them, the people of Judah and Jerusalem had the expectation that God would always protect them from being destroyed and their land safe from foreign invasion. God's comment in vs. 6: "*I will lay it waste*" (NKJV), within the context of the song-parable of the vineyard may have made some wonder what He meant. But now there is no wondering. God will do something that will gut their land of its resources including its people. It should be remembered that Isaiah may have written this section of his prophecy, chapters 1-6 during the year in which king Uzziah died, c. 739 B.C. The northern kingdom of Israel had not yet been destroyed and its people had not yet been taken into captivity by the Assyrians. This would occur in 722 B.C. So, for the people of Judah and Jerusalem they had no immediate reference to just how serious God's intentions were regarding their removal from the land.

In a later time, approximately 609 B.C. the prophet Habakkuk was lamenting to God about the violence, wickedness and iniquity of the people of Judah. The prophet cried: "How long, O LORD, must I cry, and you not listen? I cry out to you "Violence," but you do not save." (Habakkuk 1:2). Just as in Isaiah's time, the people had ignored God's law and perverted justice. God responded to Habakkuk that indeed He has heard and will do something about the situation in Judah. God stated in Habakkuk 1:5

Look at the nations, and see.

Be absolutely amazed.

*For I am doing a deed in your days
which you will not believe,
even if you were told about it.*

God told Habakkuk that He was raising up the Chaldeans to destroy nations and take captives, verses 6-11. After this shocking revelation, Habakkuk appeals to God and states "*we will not die*" vs. 12 (NKJV), and reminds God that His eyes were too pure to gaze on (approve) evil;" vs. 13. The Lord again responded to the prophet that the vision He gave would not delay (2:3). Habakkuk then acknowledges the Lord's report and he was in fear. He replied to the Lord: "*In wrath remember mercy.*" (3:2). He later stated: "*I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.*" (NASB) 3:16. In the end of his prophecy, Habakkuk gives a testimony of praise and rejoicing in the Lord even though calamity will come. 3:17-19. The lament and prophecy of Habakkuk is the counterpoint to the prophecy of Isaiah recorded in chapter 5 verses 26-30. God would be patient and would wait from 739 B.C. to 586 B.C. before the final destruction of the temple and Jerusalem would be completed by the Chaldeans (Babylonians) under the direction of Nebuchadnezzar. The beginning of the Babylonian siege and captivity of Judah and Jerusalem was in 605 B.C which was just four years after Habakkuk recorded his prophecy. He would have witnessed this judgment by God on his people. Isaiah would have heard about the overthrow of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. but he was spared the complete destruction of his own nation.

Isaiah begins this third statement of judgment by the words, "*He will send*" indicating that this is an additional judgment to the two preceding ones declared in verses 24-25. The Lord makes it clear that this judgment is what He will accomplish. Two figures are used to describe how call will call a distant nation to quickly come and destroy Judah and Jerusalem. *First*, God will send (lift up) a signal to a distant nation. The signal was a flag or banner used to call for the assembling of an army. *Second*, God will "whistle" for this nation to come "*from the ends of the earth.*" In the context of the judgment on Jerusalem the specific nation would have been Babylon. But as God mentions "nations" (NIV & NKJV), this prophecy would also include the Assyrians who advanced against the northern nation of Israel and conquered it in 722 B.C and also captured most cities of Judah in 701 B.C. See Isaiah chapters 36-37. The armies of these nations will be prompted into swift action by God's whistling for them as if they had been prepared and ready for battle and were waiting for His call.

These nations, although they would not understand nor acknowledge it, were being prepared for God's purposes and plans in dealing with His wicked and rebellious people. They certainly would have understood they were masters of their own destiny and expansion of territory was their sovereign right yet they were but God's instruments in his outworking of His dealings with humanity. Secular history has recorded the movement of the people in the ancient near-east in the rise and fall of great nations. The history (His-story) of God reveals His movements behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes.

Many years later God gave this message to the prophet Jeremiah regarding the army that would destroy Judah and Jerusalem: *"Therefore, this is what the LORD of hosts says: "Because you have not listened to my words,⁹ I will send and gather all the tribes of the north, says the LORD, led by Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all the surrounding nations. I will utterly destroy them and make them an object of horror, a hissing ridicule, and a perpetual ruin.¹⁰ Moreover I will remove from them the voice of laughter and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the bride, the sound of the millstones and the night lights of the lamps in their homes.¹¹ This whole land will become a desolate wasteland and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years."* Jeremiah 25: 8-11.

5:27-28 *None of them are tired or stumble;
none will slumber or sleep;
not a belt will be loosed,
not a thong of their sandals will be broken.*
²⁸ *Their arrows are sharp,
and all their bows bent.
Their horses' hoofs are like flint,
and their wheels like a whirlwind.*

The army the Lord calls will be alert and ready for battle with no encumbrances to slow it down. Its armaments will be ready for action and its equipment and conveyances will be swift for direct confrontation with its enemies. The portrayal of this foreign army was designed to instill fear into the people of Judah and Jerusalem who had become complacent with their position as the Lord's chosen people. They had assumed no one would be able to overthrow them and with their unchecked moral freedom, they had flaunted their vile lifestyle before God. God would swiftly deal with their pompous immorality. See Isaiah 3:8-9.

5:29 *Their roaring is like a lion,
they roar like young lions.
They growl, seize their prey,
and haul it off,
and there is no one to rescue.*

The foreign troops to be summoned by God would terrify Judah and Jerusalem just as a lioness and young lions would roar over the prey it has seized for devouring. In the distant past, a pagan seer had declared a similar statement about the people of Israel who were journeying to their promised land. Balaam was prompted by God to state: "*Behold, a people rises like a lioness, and as a lion it lifts itself; It will not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain*". Numbers 23:24. In Isaiah's day, the Lord brings a similar word not to describe His people but to announce how His people will be devoured by an ungodly military force. David had also worried that his enemy would overpower him and prayed to God for protection lest his pursuer would, "*tear my soul like a lion, dragging me away while there is none to deliver.*" Psalm 7:2. David was protected by God from his enemy but the vile people who had paraded their sin before God would not be so delivered for their God had now become their enemy.

5:30 *They will roar over them in that day
like the roaring of the sea.
If one looks at the land,
there is darkness and distress;
even the light is darkened by clouds.*

The growling noise as of lion of the army that the Lord will send to destroy Judah and Jerusalem will sound like the roaring of the sea. Their noise of this oncoming army will terrorize the people before the troops arrive at the city walls to break them down and completely devour the people inside. This prophecy certainly pointed to Assyria's armies which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722-721 B.C. and most of Judah in 702-701 B.C. and also to the military forces of Babylon who first came upon Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and then demolished the city and the temple in 586 B.C. Yet, there is also a hint of a far fulfillment of this prophecy. With the words of vs. 30: "*darkness*" and "*distress*" and "*even the light is darkened by clouds*" there is an ominous pointing to a far distant time when the light of the sun will be darkened and God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth. Selected references: Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:2, 2:10, 2:30-31, 3:15; Amos 5:18, 5:20; Revelation 6:12-17. Many other portions of Scripture give details of the "day of the Lord" to which this very early prophecy in Isaiah 5:30 likely alludes.

An alternate interpretation of the above verses is given by David L. Cooper who understands a far future time period for the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy:

THIS sermon concerning the vineyard of Jehovah ends with a paragraph, verses 26-30, which foretells the final siege and distress of the Jewish people in the Tribulation. "And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly" (vs. 26). This gathering of the nations against the Jews is a subject of constant discussion by the prophets. Isaiah represented this future judgment as being an irresistible force which none could withstand. In concluding his remarks, he declared that "they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof" (vs. 30). The time here foreseen will be one of unprecedented distress and sorrow to the people of Israel.

The information contained in this prophecy is supplemented by other predictions which show us that, although Israel in and of herself cannot stand against these mighty aggressors, God will supernaturally strengthen the remnant who will retard, and to a certain extent repel, the invader until the Lord Jesus himself appears upon the scene and defeats the enemy (cf. Zech., chap. 14). (D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-November 1943).

Teaching Outline for Isaiah 5:8-30

- 5:8-12: Woes for Sins of Self Indulgence
- 5:13-15 Lord's Righteous Judgment Declared
- 5:16-17 The Lord exalted in judgment / The land exploited in judgment
- 5:18-23 Woes for Sins of Self Corruption
- 5:24-30 Lord's Righteous Judgment Declared

B. Isaiah's Vision of the Lord: Chapter 6

1. The Contrition of the Prophet: 6:1-7
2. The Commissioning of the Prophet: 6:8-13

Following what many see as a lengthy introduction, in chapters 1 to 5, to the entire prophecy of Isaiah, is one of the most glorious visions of God recorded in Scripture. Some may wonder why chapter 6 was not placed at the beginning of the book. Upon a careful study of chapter 6 and the chapters preceding and following it, a suggested solution as to the position of chapter 6 in the prophecy of Isaiah is offered. In chapters 1 to 5, Isaiah is pronouncing the righteous and holy judgment of God on sinful, rebellious and unrepentant Israel. Hope lies in the distant future but only destruction and banishment will be the lot of the Jewish people for the decades ahead. In chapter 6 Isaiah is commissioned to be God's faithful spokesman to a doomed people who will not repent. Yet hope remains for the "stump" that is a holy seed who will be a tenth portion of the people who will grow in the future to an obedient and prosperous nation under God. In chapters 7 to 12, many prophecies are declared regarding a singular holy seed, one who is called the Branch. This One is the ultimate hope for Israel and the world. Chapter 6 is a pivot between devastating destruction and divine deliverance. Isaiah is commissioned to declare God's message to a deaf, blind and heartless people for whom God, in amazing grace and love, is preparing One to come who will open their ears and eyes and turn their stony hearts into fountains of obedience and worship.

Victor Buksbazen makes some general observations regarding Chapter Six:

It is generally agreed that the first chapter of Isaiah is an introduction to the whole book. Chapters 2-5 present a collection of prophetic messages covering the earliest period of Isaiah's ministry during the reign of Uzziah and Jotham, approximately from 740-735 B.C.

During that period in spite of solemn warnings of Isaiah, and his predictions of approaching disaster, the people continued to sink deeper in their disobedience and defiance of God, with resulting moral decay. Meanwhile Israel's enemies were forging an ever tighter noose around Israel and Judah, menacing the very existence of the two divided and feuding kingdoms. No doubt Isaiah must have been asking himself why his nation was rushing so blindly toward its own doom. The prophet found the answer to his painful query in recalling the commission which the LORD of Hosts gave to him early in his ministry.

He remembered that he was called to speak to a people who would neither hear nor heed his message. Now things were coming to pass exactly the way the Lord said they would. The political and moral situation of Israel served to confirm the prophet, that he was called to a frustrating and apparently useless ministry, described in 6:9,10. Isaiah's call was further confirmed by later events during the disastrous reign of Ahaz. These events are reflected in the prophecies of chapters 7-12. The placing of chapter 6 in its present position, therefore, appeared to be natural and logical, serving to clarify the past as well as future events. (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 136).

1. The Contrition of the Prophet: 6:1-7

The opening verse of chapter 6 provides an historical reference for Isaiah's most remarkable meeting with the Lord. King Uzziah had a lengthy and prosperous 52-year reign in Judah and was able to achieve much for the Jewish people as recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 26 and 2 Kings 15:1-8. 2 Chronicles 26:16 records that: "*But when he became powerful, his heart became proud which destroyed him. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.*" God immediately punished Uzziah for his sin striking Uzziah with leprosy from which he never recovered. He lived in a separate house and was cut off from the house of the Lord. 2 Chronicles 26:16-23. The year Uzziah died was approximately 740 B.C. There is a stunning contrast between Uzziah and Isaiah in their experiences within the temple and the altar of incense. Also the irony of this description of "two kings", one human and sinful, and the other divine and holy, is emphasized by the prophet so his audience will immediately understand the impact of Isaiah's meeting with the exalted Lord of the universe.

6:1 *In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.*

Isaiah does more than just provide an historical context. It brings into stark contrast the perished body of a human king in the grave and the high, exalted and eternally living King of kings. Human kings are fallible, prone to corruption, and all of them have died or will die. They all have the same earthly destiny in that their bodies decay in a grave. Isaiah saw the Lord, the eternal King of kings who is infallible, completely holy and will never die. The eternal One was sitting on a throne in the temple because the temple belonged to Him. The ultimate purpose of the temple was the glorifying exaltation of the Lord of the temple in worship. The train of Lord's robe filled the temple. There was no place for anything or anyone else that would compete for pre-imminence in His temple.

David L. Cooper suggests an alternative temple location other than the physical temple in Jerusalem during Isaiah's ministry:

What temple was this? There is a temple in heaven (Rev. 11:19). There were the Temples of Solomon, of Zerubbabel, of Herod, and there will be the Jewish temple which will stand in Jerusalem during the Tribulation, and the millennial temple which will be built by the Lord Jesus (Zech. 6:12). Of these various sanctuaries, which was the one appearing in our passage? The answer is to be found in John 12:39-41. In this passage John quoted from Isaiah, chapter 6, and declared that the prophet made these predictions because he (Isaiah) saw His glory; and he spake to Him. John therefore interpreted the vision of Isaiah, chapter 6, as one of the Lord Jesus in His glory--the millennial kingdom. This conclusion is confirmed by the clause "The whole earth is full of his glory." The earth will, for the first time, be filled with the glory of the Lord when Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom. Further confirmation of this interpretation is found in the prophet's words: "For mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." There can therefore be no doubt regarding this prophecy's being a prediction of Christ's millennial reign. (Dr. D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-November 1943).

The Hebrew word for "Lord" in 6:1 is *Adonay* which is always depicted in the Old Testament as a name reserved for God only. It first appears in Scripture in Genesis 15:2 God had just promised Abram (before his name was changed to Abraham) that he would receive a great reward. Abram responds, "*O Sovereign LORD, what will you give me, since I am still childless?*" Abram called God by the name of "*Adonay Yahweh*" meaning: *Adonay* (who is Lord over all and Lord over all the earth, the Lord of Lords) and *Yahweh* (a most holy name for God who is eternal and self-existent). The name *Adonay* occurs often in the O. T. It is used by Isaiah as a proper name for God 47 times. Selected significant verses where Isaiah refers to God as *Adonay*: 7:14; 11:11; 25:8; 40:10; 48:16; 61:1, 11. (note: all occurrences of *Adonay* in the Scriptures are significant).

The throne of the Lord was "lofty and exalted" (KJV: "high and lifted up"). This meant Isaiah had to look up to see the Lord who was as Isaiah was to later state was "the high and exalted One." Isaiah 57:15. Another significant occurrence of the meaning of lofty and exalted is in Isaiah 2:2 in which the prophet states, the mountain of the Lord will in the last days be "raised" above the hills. The earthly king, Uzziah had died and his body was now buried and decomposing in the ground. The eternal King, is always living and He is exalted above all else in the universe. Even the adornments of the Lord are larger than life for just the train of His robe filled the temple. For Isaiah, the presence of the Lord in the temple was startling, awe inspiring and grandly overpowering. For a comparison see 1 Kings 22:19 where the prophet Micaiah spoke of seeing the Lord: "*I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.*" The other occasions (selected only, not an exhaustive listing) where the Scriptures record the meeting and visions of humans with God (or the Angel of God) include: Genesis 16:7-13 (Hagar); 18:1-33 (Abraham); 28:10-16 (Jacob); Exodus 24:9-11 (Elders of Israel); 33:17-23 (and many other occasions where Moses met with God), Joshua 5:13-15 (Joshua); Job 38:1-42:9 (Job and Eliphaz); Jeremiah 1:4-10 (Jeremiah); Ezekiel 1:1-2:10 (Ezekiel); Daniel 7:9-14 (Daniel); Zechariah 1:7-21 (Zechariah); Acts 9:3-7

(Paul); and Revelation 1:9-20 (John). The N.T. records several occasions where humans met with the resurrected Christ before His return to be with the Father.

6:2 *Above him stood the seraphim, each one had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.*

Isaiah next saw at least two six-winged Seraphim standing above the Lord. Seraphim, is a plural form of the word “seraph” meaning “fiery ones”. There are not many instances in the Scriptures where winged beings are seen. Ezekiel saw Cherubim, Isaiah saw Seraphim and the Apostle John saw living creatures similar to those whom Ezekiel saw. These creatures appear to be either a separate created order than Angels or a different (higher?) form of Angel. Angels themselves are not described in Scripture as having wings. Although in Daniel 9:21, regarding the angel Gabriel, the KJV states “being caused to fly swiftly” and the NIV states “came to me in swift flight.” The NASB translates this phrase as “came to me in my extreme weariness.” Refer to Stephen R. Miller’s New American Commentary on Daniel (pages 250-251) for a discussion as to why the NASB translation is preferred.

Isaiah saw that the Seraphim used two of their wings to cover their faces, two to cover their feet and used the remaining two wings for flight. It is conjecture to give definitive reasons why the Seraphim covered their eyes and feet. Perhaps they did so to show their complete humility before the exalted Lord and also to be continually worshipping the Lord.

6:3 *They called out to each other,
"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!"*

The prophet hears one of the Seraphim calling out to another, “*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.*” The thrice repeated attribute of God as holy is a powerful emphasis on the character of God. God in His holiness is set apart completely from the sinfulness of humanity. As the holy and eternal King of the Jewish nation, the world and the universe, God in His holiness is perfect and absolutely pure, blameless, true, and without any trace of sin or evil. The three-part announcement of God’s holiness also by six winged creatures is recorded in Revelation 4:8. No other attribute of God is so emphasized in Scripture. Without being dogmatic or overstating the case, it may be said that if one had to describe God in one word, that word would be holy.

The other statement of the Seraphim regarding God is that “the whole earth is full of His glory”. This statement is also found in Numbers 14:21 and Psalm 72.19. The word glory, (Hebrew: *kabod*) has the meaning of great weight or quantity and with God it also has other possibilities of meaning. For example, Thomas Constable states, “God’s glory refers to the outshining of His person”. (Thomas L. Constable, *Isaiah*, page 43).

As the Lord Himself fills the earth just as He filled the temple, there is no place on earth where His glory is not present. God's glorious light is victorious over darkness (John 1:5) even the darkness of our hearts as the Apostle Paul states: "*For it is God who said, "Let there be light shining out of darkness," who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Thus, the most intimate shining of God's glory on the earth is within the hearts of those who have believed in His Son, Jesus Christ. The Apostle John wrote: "*Isaiah said these things, because he saw his glory and spoke about him.*" (John 14: 41). The "Him" John is writing about is Jesus Christ.

Victor Buksbazen adds:

"The essence and supreme attribute of God according to this vision of God, is His holiness, which expresses His perfection, His purity, and His absolute "otherness" and "aboveness" over all His creation. The glory of God which fills the whole earth, or as some have translated this passage "the fullness of the earth is His glory," is the reflection and manifestation in the universe of the holiness of God." (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 139).

6:4 *At the sound of their cry the door frames shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.*

The words of the Seraphim were so powerful that the "*foundations of the thresholds shook...and the house was filled with smoke.*" (ESV). This indicates that this was not a heavenly vision and that Isaiah was in the temple in Jerusalem. Although there may be other possible sources, the smoke was likely from the altar of incense. God gave specific instructions to Moses regarding the making of fragrant incense which was only to be used for the purposes God directed. (Exodus 30:34-38). Incense was used in an atonement activity by Aaron upon directions from Moses on behalf of the people of Israel God was about to consume due to their rebellion. (Numbers 16: 41-47). David many years earlier prayed: "*Let my prayer be accepted, as incense before you, my lifted hands, as an evening sacrifice.*" (Psalm 141:2). Thus, the proper use of incense was counted by God as a holy activity by His people. The improper use of incense brought very prompt judgment by God, resulting in God's wrath upon the perpetrator and for some instant death. (Leviticus 10:1-3; Numbers 16:1-35; 1Kings 13:1-6 and 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). God came to abhor the burning of incense by those who trampled His courts and were very wicked in worshipping Him and as recorded in Isaiah 1:13, God declared: "*Your Incense is detestable to Me.*" However, in the meeting between God and Isaiah, incense was used for its rightful and holy activity of atonement.

6:5 *Then said I, "Woe is me! For I am doomed; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips. My eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."*

Isaiah, upon seeing the Lord, realized his awful sinful condition and the rebellious position of the Jewish people. Isaiah pronounced woe upon himself. He knew that no one could see the living Lord and live. See Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:20 and Judges 13:22. Yet he was not consumed. God is merciful to those who are truly repentant. Isaiah, in the very first words that he spoke about himself, were words from a contrite heart realizing his sinfulness and guilt for he said: "*I am a man of unclean lips.*"

He also was repentant on behalf of the nation whom he knew were also a people of unclean lips. Seeing God in His glory or a representative from God has brought others to acknowledge that they were unable to stand before Him. See Job 42:5-6; Daniel 10:14-17; and Revelation 1:17. To see God in His holiness and majesty is to instantly recognize one's own abhorrent sinfulness. Sinners have no standing place in the presence of God. Only by faith, in the Messiah, who is God's Son, will anyone "stand" in God's presence for they will be declared righteous because of their faith.

6:6-7 *Then a seraphim flew to me, having a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.*

⁷ *He touched my mouth with it, and said,*

*"Look, this has touched your lips;
your iniquity is taken away,
and your sin forgiven."*

These verses record a truly remarkable event in the life of Isaiah. One of the Seraphim flew to Isaiah with a burning coal which he had taken from the altar with tongs and touched Isaiah's mouth with the coal and the Seraphim declared: "Lo (or behold), this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven." Recognition of one's sins is the first step in true repentance. It is acknowledging what God already knows, that sin is present in one's life and has not been confessed. When Isaiah confessed his sin, the Lord immediately forgave him.

Thomas Constable suggests:

Isaiah only acknowledged his hopeless condition—he did not plead with God or make vows to God—and God then went into action. Confession must precede cleansing (cf. 1 John 1:9). The altar from which the seraph took the coal was probably the brazen altar in heaven, in which case the coal itself symbolizes substitute sacrifice.¹⁰² Fire from the brazen altar lit the incense on the incense altar in Israel, so, whichever altar may be in view, the coal connects with sacrifice.

Ultimately, all sin is forgiven because of sacrifice.¹⁰³ *Fire* ("burning coal. . . from the altar) in the Old Testament symbolizes the wrath of God (Gen. 3:24; Num. 11:1-3), the holiness of God (Exod. 3:2-6; 19:18-25), His purifying process (Num. 31:22-23; Mal. 3:2-3), and the context of the Law (Deut. 4:12, 33, 36).

"A seraph peels off from his flight path around the throne, diving straight for Isaiah. He's holding a burning coal that he took from the altar with tongs, but not because it is hot. After all, a seraph himself is a burning one. He took this coal with tongs because it is a holy thing. It belongs to the place of sacrifice and atonement and forgiveness. But this holy thing touches Isaiah's dirty mouth, and it does not hurt him, it heals him. What we must see, in the context of the whole Bible, is that this burning coal symbolizes the finished work of Christ on the cross."¹⁰⁴ [Notes: 102: Motyer, p. 78. 103: The Nelson . . . , p. 1122. 104: Ortlund, pp. 79-80] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, pages 44-45).

Some may want to describe this as the conversion of Isaiah and this viewpoint has much to commend it. Others may see this as a re-dedication of the prophet to the ministry of the Lord. Whatever view is understood, Isaiah was now ready to receive a commission from God to serve Him in a most unpleasant and difficult task.

J. Alec Motyer suggests:

The live coal thus encapsulates the ideas of atonement, propitiation, satisfaction, forgiveness, cleansing and reconciliation, and of these spiritual realities Isaiah, the erstwhile doomed sinner, is left in no doubt when the seraph explains: ‘Behold, as soon as this touched your lips your iniquity went, and, as for your sin—paid by ransom! (J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah*, page 72).

2. The Commissioning of the Prophet: 6:8-13

This second part of Isaiah 6 deals with the commission God gave Isaiah upon Isaiah’s willingness and request to be used by God. God gave His commission only after Isaiah asked to be sent by God. Some see a three-point teaching within chapter 6 using the KJV as a reference. In vs. 5, Isaiah states Woe (is me for I am ruined). In vs. 7 the Seraphim states, Lo (behold) and in vs. 8 God asks, who will go (for us). Preachers often have used this three-point message of Woe, Lo and Go to explain the need for Christians to confess their sins, trust God for the forgiveness of their sins and then be obedient to go and serve God wherever he will send them.

6:8 *Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,
"Whom will I send,
and who will go for us?"
I replied, "I am here. Send me."*

Isaiah hears a request for service from the triune God: “*who will go for us,*” and Isaiah responds to the request by stating one of the most beloved pleas to God in all of Scripture: “*Here am I, Send me.*” (ASV). Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord: “*Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us*”. This is a very interesting combination of the oneness of the Lord explained in a plural sense. See also: Genesis 1:26 (at creation), 11:7 (scattering of peoples at Babel). The New Testament is very clear on the plurality of the Godhead ascribing works of God to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit: Father: (Matthew 3:17); Son: (John 1:1); Spirit (Acts 28:25-27). For a full treatment of the plurality of the Godhead, see David L. Cooper, *Messianic Series*: Chapter 2: The Plurality of the Divine Personalities, of Volume 1: *The God of Israel*, Biblical Research Society, 1945.

Only after Isaiah has recognized and was contrite about his sinfulness and then after he had received atonement for his sin, was he ready to meet and receive a commission from God. This is where the stunning contrast between Isaiah and Uzziah is most evident. Uzziah went into the temple without permission with head held high in pride. Isaiah entered the temple rightfully, (some claim he may have been a priest), with a humble spirit. Uzziah committed an act of sinful rebellion against the Lord’s stated commands regarding the incense altar.

Isaiah stood obedient confessing his and the sins of the people of Judah before the Lord. Uzziah received immediate condemnation from the priests and immediate punishment from the Lord. Isaiah received forgiveness for his sins, represented by having his lips touched by a burning coal from the altar of incense, and a commission from the Lord. Uzziah entered the temple full of pride and self-exaltation and left the temple humbled, punished and banned from being with his people. Isaiah entered the temple humbled and contrite and met the true exalted King and was forgiven, cleansed and commissioned to go among his people with the message of the Lord.

6:9-10 *He said, "Go, and tell this people:*

*Keep on listening, but do not understand;
keep on looking, but do not perceive.*

¹⁰ *Make the heart of this people insensitive,
and make their ears deaf,
and shut their eyes;
so that they may not see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and repent and be healed."*

Immediately following Isaiah's response to God's call by exclaiming, "*Here am I, Send Me,*" God gives him a very difficult commission as recorded in verses 9-13. It was a commission to proclaim (tell) the Lord's word to a people who would be hard of hearing to the point of being deaf, with poor eyesight to the point of being blind and with selfish hearts to the point of being insensitive. Within the commission was the message of condemnation that God was giving to the Jewish people. The proclamation that Isaiah was to give would be the source of the people's hardness of hearing, seeing and understanding. God was giving the people over to their sins. See also Ezekiel's experience as recorded in Ezekiel chapters 2 and 3. The Apostle Paul explains this method of God regarding the people in Paul's day as recorded in Romans 1:18-32. God in both instances was giving them over to their sinful rebellion and allowing sin to have its destructive and deadly consequences. God also hardened Pharaoh's heart as recorded in Exodus 9:12.

The New Testament often references Isaiah 6:9-10: Vs. 9: Luke 8:10; Verses 9-10: Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Acts 28:26-27; Vs. 10: John 12:40. The Apostle John, quotes Isaiah 6:9 in chapter 12 vs. 40 of his gospel and immediately follows up with the amazing revelation: "*These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.*" The "His and "Him" John is describing in context of chapter 12 of his gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a startling statement of the pre-advent appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. Isaiah saw the Son of God in the temple. See comments above for vs. 1.

6:11-12 *Then I asked, "Lord, how long?" He answered,
 "Until cities are destroyed without inhabitant,
 and houses uninhabited,
 and the land become absolutely devastated,
¹² and the LORD has sent everyone far away,
 and the midst of the land is abandoned.*

Isaiah, vs. 11, asked how long? (How long was he to keep proclaiming judgment on the people of Judah and Jerusalem). The Lord's response (verses 11-12) was chilling. Isaiah was to keep proclaiming the word of the Lord until no one was left in the land and until the land itself was abandoned (utterly desolate). There would be no escaping the judgement of God for the people of Judah. Their rebelliousness and blatant defiance of God and His word had reached a point where God, in His righteous indignation could not allow to continue without a just punishment. Isaiah was to keep these stunning words in mind for the remainder of his prophetic ministry. Any hope for the fulfillment of God's covenantal promises would not come upon these people. Isaiah was to minister to a doomed people who would face the full wrath of God.

David L. Cooper adds:

To the Lord the prophet responded: "Lord, how long?" Isaiah understood that his ministry, as far as good results were concerned, would not be a great success. He therefore asked how long he would have to continue such seemingly profitless labors. To this query the Lord responded: "Until cities be wasted without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land." It is usually supposed that the prophet began his ministry in the middle of the eighth century B.C., according to the common chronology. This reduction of the country to a condition of desolation occurred about the close of the century. Thus there was something like half a century during which God declared the prophet was to engage in his unappreciated ministry. The true servant of God is to deliver the message in firmness and love--without compromise--regardless of visible outward results. (D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly – November 1943).

6:13 *Even if a tenth remains in it,
 it will be destroyed again.
 Just like a terebinth and an oak whose stump remains
 when they are cut down;
 so the holy seed will be its stump.*

Yet there was hope. God states "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it." (NASB). This tenth portion, likely a tenth of the people who will survive, will undergo trouble. They will be "like a terebinth and an oak whose stump remains when they are cut down; so the holy seed will be its stump."

The reference to the “holy seed” has both a national (ethnic) and singular fulfillment. The national fulfillment is seen in several passages of Scripture. These verses speak of the remnant God has chosen from the Jewish people, both from Judah and Israel. Selected references: 1 Kings 19:18 (the first statement in Scripture to a remnant the Lord has kept for Himself); Isaiah 11:11-16 (a remnant to be saved); Isaiah 41:8-16 (Israel called God’s chosen servant whom He has not rejected); Isaiah 43:1-13 (God’s promise of redemption to His people); Isaiah 45:25 (all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory in the Lord), Isaiah 53:10-11 (the many to be justified); Isaiah 59:15-21 (God’s salvation and covenant with the redeemed); Isaiah 65:8-10 (God’s chosen ones to inherit the land); Isaiah 65:23 (the offspring will not labor in vain or bear children for calamity), Isaiah 66:22 (eternal endurance of the offspring and name of the sons of Israel). Many other references in Isaiah to the remnant will be discussed in later sections of this study. A reference to the remnant in the New Testament is found in Romans 11:5.

The singular fulfillment to the “holy seed” is the coming and ministry of the Messiah, whom Isaiah called the “Branch”, “Prince of Peace”, “Servant” and other names describing the person and role of the Messiah. The book of Isaiah has several passages which prophesy of this One to come both in His first advent and the events of His second advent including the Messianic Kingdom. The John MacArthur NASB (Updated) Study Bible provides a comprehensive listing of references in the book of Isaiah regarding the Messiah’s first advent (page 946) and events leading to and during the Messianic Kingdom (page 1032).

Victor Buksbazen again comments:

Verse 13 is characteristic of the whole message of Isaiah. In spite of all his predictions of gloom and disaster, there is a bright glimmer of hope for Israel’s future, the rainbow of promise, after the violent storm of destruction has passed.

For a while the message of gloom continues without relief: Even if a tenth of the people should survive and come back from exile, that small survivorship will again be consumed, just as when the terebinth and the oak in the fall shed their leaves and are burned. Yet all is not lost, the stump of the tree remains and shall live again. One day it will cover itself with leaves as with a new glory. Verse 13 is difficult to translate because the Hebrew words tend themselves to differing interpretations. The word “leaves” is not expressly in our Hebrew text, but seems to be implied. Others translate “like the terebinth and the oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled.” (R.S.V.). However the basic thought remains the same. The Hebrew word “*matseveh*” can be translated either as “a stump” or “substance.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, pages 142-143).

Teaching Outline for Isaiah 6:1-13

6:1-7 The Contrition of the Prophet

6:1 The Earthly King and the Eternal King

6:2 The Servants of the King

6:3-4 The Holiness of the King

6:5 Isaiah’s Contrition before the King

6:6-7 Isaiah’s Atonement from the King

6:8-13 The Commissioning of the Prophet

6:8 The Request of the King and Response of the Prophet

6:9-10 The Response of those who Refuse the Message

6:11-12 The Removal of those who Refuse the Message

6:13 The Remnant to be Restored