

Empty Religion

Isaiah 1

Main Idea

The Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah primarily to Judah (region) and Jerusalem (capital city) because of their hypocrisy and neglect that was due to their sin.

Judgment, Hope, and Glory are all issued in this introduction – God is bringing global judgment for sin, but he is providing global hope for salvation in order that global glory may be spread over all the earth.

Overview

Setup to Isaiah:

- The name “Isaiah” means “the Lord saves”, which is the theme of this book
 - Its named “Isaiah” b/c as we learn from NT authors, he is its author and the prophet who speaks the words of God to God’s people:
- The book of Isaiah is part of the group of books in the Old Testament that are referred to as ‘the prophets’:
 - The first 5 books of the Bible are called the Law, then the next group of books are called the prophets...
 - They describe the history of how God’s ppl lived (or did not live) out that Law
 - The final section of the OT is the Writings, which includes the books of poetry....Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Daniel
- Isaiah’s ministry is around 740-700 BC (long time)
 - More than 700 years before Christ came
- As you can see there in vs. 1 Isaiah’s ministry is largely towards Judah and Jerusalem, although he is going to address all of Israel, the surrounding region and eventually the whole world:
 - But his focus is going to be on the Southern Tribe of Judah and Jerusalem, which is the capital of Judah, oftentimes referred to in this book as “Zion”
- Isaiah has also been referred to as the “Bible in miniature”:
 - While the chapter and verses are not inspired by God we do see that Isaiah has 66 chapters, so too are there 66 books in the Bible:
 - Just like the Bible is broken up by 39 books in the OT and 27 books in the NT....
 - So too is Isaiah broken up in the same way:
 - The first 39 chapters largely will talk about the Judgment that will come upon Israel during Isaiah’s lifetime and...
 - The final 27 books focus on the coming hope of the Messiah that would bring about Atonement and an everlasting city of Righteousness, like we read about in Revelation

What is Israel Like? What is the Problem?

- Vs. 2: They are children that the Lord has reared up but have rebelled
- Vs. 3: They are dumber than animals:
 - God’s people aren’t even at the level of Fido the dog who at least knows who his master is
 - They are a people that do not understand who they are
- Vs. 4: They are a sinful nation, loaded down w/ sin, & kids of evil doers
 - Language of “forsake” there is the same word we get our word ‘divorce’
 - In a way they have tried to divorce themselves from God:

- They've forsaken him, despised him, estranged themselves from Him
- Vs. 5: Their whole head & heart is sick:
- Vs. 6: from the bottom to the top they are covered up w/ sickness
- Vs. 7 is an allusion to the Northern Tribes of Israel who were defeated by the Assyrians in 722 bc
 - But the Lord in His kindness preserved Jerusalem (vs. 9)
- Israel is compared to a booth in a vineyard or a lodge in a cucumber field (v 8)
 - Farmers would have constructed temporary housing so they didn't have to go home in harvest season...the Lord says that they are like that:
 - They are like a Cardboard house...they are so flimsy
- Vs. 10: They are like Sodom & Gomorrah:
 - The well known place of debauchery that God destroyed in Gen. 19
- Vs. 21: How the faithful city has become a whore
- Vs. 23: Their leaders are corrupt...everyone loves a bribe
 - They do not care for the fatherless nor do they care for the widow
- Vss. 29-30: They hope in Oaks & Gardens that have no life in them
 - In other words: like many people today, they sought after worldly strength and pleasure that looked big & beautiful on the outside but inside they offer no life
- You may be surprised to read vss. 11-15:
 - Apparently these guys were offering the sacrifices up to God that they were asked to do:
 - They are showing up at the Temple
 - Burning Incense & celebrating all the festivals as they were instructed:
 - They were even praying...yet the Lord says their hands are full of blood
- The Problem is the sin that resided within them (vs. 4)

What was the Lord's response?

- Vs. 11: What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
 - I've had enough of your burnt offerings
 - I do not delight in the blood of bulls
- Vs. 13: Stop bringing me your vain offerings...
 - Your incense is an abomination...
- Vs. 14: My soul hates all your New Moon Feasts and your convocations
 - They've become a burden to me
 - Vs. 15: I'm so tired of your prayers I'm not even going to listen to them

What is He going to do?

- Vs. 18: The Lord wants to reason with His people and there He promises to cleanse them
- Vs. 24-27: He will avenge wrongdoers, Judge the unrepentant and create that Faithful City once again (vs. 21)
- Vs. 27 pictures the Gospel where by Righteousness & Justice will be accomplished by the Lord to those that repent
 - Note the similarities in Romans 3.21-26
- He will consume the unrepentant and expose their desire for external strength/beauty (vs.28-31)

Questions

Discussion Starter: Take a moment to work through the context or review of Isaiah and maybe get some feedback about where Isaiah fits into the story of Redemption:

1. Read Isaiah 1. Who is the Lord addressing here through Isaiah? What is the significance that the first word is "Children"? What images do you see in the text that explain what they are like?
2. In verses 11-15, how do you see God's people "obeying" (at least externally) the various things He asked them to do, so why does the Lord respond the way He does?

3. From the text, how do you see the Lord reacting to their sacrifices? How does the Lord's rebuke of Judah's hypocrisy inform/instruct/correct your life?
4. What's surprising about verse 18? In what way does Isaiah 1:18, 27 make it possible for us to be "willing" and "obedient" (vs. 19)?
5. How does one get the benefits of God's justice & righteousness and not be under the judgment of them?
6. How does 1:19, 28-31 warn us?
7. In what ways does the truths of Isaiah 1 make you rejoice in Christ?

Accountability: *Where are you trusting your religious activity instead of Christ? Where do you need to repent? Where are you enjoying the cleansing justice and righteousness of Christ? Praise God for where you have seen verses 1:16-17 at work in the life of Restoration.*