

## “Reasoning with God: to What End?”

### Isaiah 1:1- 31

**Context:** Isaiah looked through the window of time of four ruling kings and saw the Lord’s salvation of the repentant remnant and His judgment of the arrogant unbeliever (Isa. 1:1; 12:2-4; 51:5-11). As a prophet, he served as God’s prosecuting attorney in the declaration God’s indictment. He also disclosed the identity, character, and future coming of the Messiah and how He would accomplish redemption. His prophetic themes of salvation and judgment and the symbolism attached to them were set in the backdrop of the Syro-Ephraimite threat to Judah (2 Chron. 28:5ff) and Sennacherib’s siege (735-701 B.C.). The book is relevant for today in that it shows God’s judgment against ancient Israel and the surrounding nations for their sins as a principle of His judgment for each individual’s sin. It also reveals God’s promised redemption of the repentant remnant of ancient Israel from the Babylonian exile as a symbol for the redemption of the believer, who is a foreigner in this world.

#### 1. God’s indictment and judgment – Isaiah 1:1-15, 4

Labeled “sinful nation” that stupidly missed the mark, Isaiah depicted Judah’s very existence as heavily punished, their nature rotten from birth, and their actions a cause of corruption. They had cut their tie with YHWH and, having utter contempt for His holiness and love, had shunned Him. God’s discipline through widespread destruction of the nation resulted in a ritualistic worship devoid of repentance and thus wholly rejected by God.

#### 2. God’s call to repentance – Isaiah 1:16-20, 16-17

Using the symbolism of Levitical purification, Isaiah ordered Judah to choose to turn away from corrupt behavior which mocked God in His very presence. Two markers of this repentance were given: (1) understand and imitate God-like behavior as revealed in the Historical Writings and Torah (i.e. the good) and (2) take care to weigh your behavior so as to behave as God would (i.e. do justice). Change in behavior on the outside comes from a willingness to change within.

#### 3. God’s redemption of the remnant – Isaiah 1: 21-31, 27-28

Zion, symbolizing the spiritually parched, shall be ransomed by Jesus Christ who paid the price of judgment for our sin on the cross. Those who have turned their hearts back to God have Christ’s righteousness imputed to them and will be deemed justified at the final judgment. Those preferring sin to salvation will receive what the consequence of sin has always been, destruction (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21).

### Study questions:

- Last week we studied how prosperity and judgment fit in with the themes of the Book of Isaiah. As a **Bible study method**, look up God’s covenant with the Jewish people summarized in Deuteronomy 30:13-20. How do the promises of God in Isaiah 1:19-20 fit in with God’s covenant with Israel? How might they apply to you (cf. John 3:36; Hebrews 3:16ff)?
- In Isaiah 1:17, the penitent are exhorted “to learn the good.” What impact would Jesus’ teaching on “the good” in Luke 18:18ff have on what is learned in Isaiah 1:10-17? Why is the purification in Isaiah 1:16 necessary? Explain how Mark 1:8; John 16:7-15 and Titus 3:5-8 clarify the “washing” called for by Isaiah.
- Isaiah 1:4 declares Judah’s nature as “rotten from birth.” How is their nature compatible with our profession of humanity’s radical woundedness (see footnote 8 ‘**On mankind**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at [www.gracepointfellowship.org](http://www.gracepointfellowship.org))? In what sense are we like them (cf. Ephesians 2:3, Romans 3:9-23)? How is our hope for redemption from this nature the same as their hope (cf. Isaiah 1:16-19; Titus 3:5-8)?

### Transformation exercise:

Memorize Isaiah 1:17. Recite it each morning as you walk out the door of your home. Ask the Spirit to make you sensitive to an opportunity to provide God’s taste of sweet blessing in someone’s life in place of bitterness that may have been left by the ruthlessness of an oppressive person.