



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 1: 1-31

“The Great Arraignment”

TRANSCRIPT

[End of Prayer] For His sake, Amen.

[Message] This is the first in our series of studies in the Prophecy of Isaiah and in the fall series we are going to cover from the first to the 27th chapter. So, we will be making some progress at times, fairly rapid, at other times not so rapid. I hope as we begin that you will make it one of your weekly tasks to read a great deal in the Book of Isaiah. Of all of the books of the Bible, this is one of the most rewarding and furthermore you will get much more out of the teaching if you read along in the text itself. It is, of course, one of the prophets and we do not today understand prophets as well as they understood them, I hope, in Isaiah's day. And we must therefore read and reread, and reread.

I am quite sure that many of you the first time that you read through Isaiah, if that is still before you, you will probably say I have finished the book, but the book has almost finished me. You will have noticed of course many wonderful passages within it, but so far as the overall teaching of the book, probably a great deal of it is lost to you at that stage. Now that is not surprising. There are very few who are able to pick up a book like this, read it through, and then understand the things that are contained within it.

You understand some things, but much of it is lost. The next time however, you will discover that you understand a little more, not only more than you did when you finished the first time, but you will understand more as you go through than you did the first time and so on. And as you keep reading it, rereading it, you will discover that more and more of the truth of Isaiah will become part of you and you will be surprised probably at the beginning how much, why I am thorough on it, and at the end you will probably be surprised how little I am thorough on it, if you will keep reading the book for yourself.

Now, I am going to try to be doing this and I am not going to make any pledges or vows and I am not going to ask you to. But, let me assure you that if you do read it, you will get a lot more out of it and let me urge you to consistently reading this book every week. It shouldn't be asking too much for you to read it through every couple of weeks. It really is not that hard and I believe you will enjoy it.

Let's turn to the first chapter now and let me introduce our study tonight with just a few general comments. We will discover that Isaiah prophesized during the reigns of several kings, most of them are listed in the first verse of the first chapter, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, many think he also ministered on into the reign of Manasseh. These were kings of Judah, the Southern Kingdom. I don't want to spend all of our time this evening on background material and so as we go along in the book at appropriate places, I will remind you of the historical background and I think in this way we will be able to grasp the times of Isaiah and understand his prophecy in the light of them. So, we will not spend a great deal of time on introduction, but I do want to say a few things about the book, about the prophet, and about his times.

Isaiah is thought by many to be greatest book in the Old Testament. In fact, it has been likened to the gospels of the New. Augustine said, "Methinks Isaiah wrote not a prophecy, but a gospel." It has been called “the fifth evangelist.” Isaiah himself has been called the Old Testament Apostle Paul or the Saint Paul of the Old Testament. It is so full of Messianic prophecy that you can construct a life of Jesus Christ and its major outlines

from it. We have texts about his birth, about his food, about his character, about his family, about his death, about his burial, about his resurrection, about his Second Advent, about his kingdom. It's really amazing how many things about our Lord Jesus Christ are found hundreds of years before he came in this one of a book. Augustine after he was converted asked Ambrose what book should he study, now that he had become a Christian. And he was told that he should study the Book of Isaiah. It wasn't really a bad piece of advice, because there is such wonderful truth in it.

The author is called Isaiah. You will notice the first words of the first verse say, "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's name means Jehovah's salvation or Jehovah is salvation. Possibly the salvation of Jehovah. We are not very quite sure how to put the Hebrew names together and translate them into English. But "Jehovah is salvation" is the common translation of his name. Now that itself expresses a wonderful truth. It expresses the fact that salvation is not found in ritual, salvation is not found in good works, salvation is not found in what we are or what we do, but salvation is found in the Lord.

Now this is the basic teaching of the Bible. Jesus' name meant salvation is of the Lord too. For his name was really Joshua, which in turn means the salvation of Jehovah. That was our Lord's name. So, Isaiah's name is very similar to it. It's a name that means Jehovah is salvation and if you are in this audience tonight and you are a Christian, you are a Christian because you have come to understand this truth that salvation is of the Lord, it's not of man. It is something that he confers upon us on the basis of grace, on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done and not because of what we do or what we have done or what we are or what we have hoped or what we hope to do, what we have resolved to be. Salvation is of the Lord. So, Jehovah is salvation that was his name. Every time you saw Isaiah you saw the message of God, didn't you? There goes Jehovah is salvation. What does Jehovah is salvation think about this. I just had a wonderful

prophetic message from Jehovah is salvation, that was his name. You know I would almost rather have that name than Lewis. Jehovah is salvation.

Isaiah, as all Hebrew students know after having read a few chapters in the book, was a man who had a great command of the Hebrew language. He was a man who apparently was as we would say well bred. He was a man who came out of a background of culture. As a matter of fact there is tradition to the effect that Isaiah was of noble descent, of kingly descent. In fact, if Jewish tradition is correct he was one of the cousins of King Uzziah. So, he was a man of royal blood. And it is not surprising when you know this to read the language that he has given us in this prophecy.

I am always amazed at the vocabulary of the Prophet Isaiah. I go back after neglecting the Hebrew text for a year or two and turned one of the passages, which I think is very familiar and I began to read it. And many of the things come back to me what every now and then I lose one of those words, which I thought I did. His vocabulary is very extensive. It's the vocabulary of a very learned man. And so I am not surprised to read that tradition has it that he was of royal blood. He had a wife. So, we understood the problem was of life. And furthermore, he had two sons. His two sons were not named like our sons, Tom, Dick, and Harry. Their names were Shear-jashub or yasub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

Now when you come to that name will you smile. How would you like to be named Maher-shalal-hash-baz? You can almost get the message before you can pronounce the name. So, he had a wife and two sons. His sons names by the way were given because they were designed as names to express certain truth Shear-jashub, Shear-jashub meant 'a remnant shall return' that's one of the great doctrines of the prophecy of Isaiah and Maher-shalal-hash-baz means “haste in booty,” "haste in prey", or something similar to that too had specific meaning in a specific context. So, his children were named with special purpose.

Isaiah, so far as we know and as far as we can tell from 2 Chronicles was a scribe. Now, if he was a scribe, then he knew a great deal of what was going on in the land of Judah and in the city of Jerusalem, for you see the scribe was the confidant of the King. It was he who recorded all of the official correspondence. And therefore Isaiah knew everything that was transpiring in Judah. He was the man for whom the King would call when he wished to look into the archives and so Isaiah probably knew more about the documents of Judah than the King himself did. He was a man who knew what was going on. He was a man who knew more than Dean Rush, knows about what's going in this country. He is a man who knew more equivalently than Linden himself knows about what's going on in the country. So, he had a remarkable position as scribe.

He was called to prophetic office, though apparently he had lived for sometime and possibly even had done some preaching. In the year that Uzziah died, will you look at the sixth chapter for just a moment. The first verse states "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple". The ninth verse says, "And he said, go and tell this people". So, you see in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah was called to the office of prophet and there was a very, very significant truth in that, which we will save until we get to the sixth chapter. He labored for perhaps 50 years. Now, Uzziah died in the year 740 BC. So, Isaiah labored till perhaps 690 BC. For 50 years, he ministered as a prophet in Judah and Jerusalem. As you read through Isaiah, you will discover that the great doctrines, which he stresses are these.

First, he stresses God's sovereignty. Just think of that text, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord". Uzziah might die, Jotham may die, Ahaz may die, Hezekiah may die, and so on, but Jehovah lives and it is good for us to remember that. Hitler dies, Stalin dies, Roosevelt dies, Johnson will die, so far as we know, all shall die, but God lives on. Now, it's important for us as Christians to remember that God is Sovereign and it is

He who controls the affairs of men, the Sovereignty of God, one of the great truths of the Book of Isaiah.

The next thing that he stresses is the thing that we are going to see stressed in this first chapter and that is Judah's sinfulness. And he does this out of the context of the Holiness of God, for one of the favorite terms for God in the Prophecy of Isaiah is a term that occurs about 31 times in the Old Testament. It's the Holy One of Israel. But strikingly it occurs 26 times in the Book of Isaiah. It's one of his favorite terms for God, the Holy One of Israel. And you know that's the great truth that we need to learn today too. Not only does our country need to know that -- you cannot really expect a country, which does not acknowledge the God who is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be very much concerned about the holiness of God, for they do not know that God.

You know, often Christians when they read in the newspapers the terrible things that are transpiring in an immoral way in our country today, they say "My, did you read that? Oh, isn't it horrible, Oh, isn't it terrible". What do you expect? What do you expect when people do not know God? When they do not know the God who is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, this is what you should expect. As you look at the front page, you should just simply say this is the fruit of the lack of knowledge of God and here it is, it's to be expected. Now, of course, in Judah's case, she had made great protestations of faith in Jehovah. And so Isaiah, as he speaks about God and calls him the Holy One of Israel, draws the contrast between the unholiness of the people and the Holy God, who is their God.

And finally the third truth that Isaiah stresses is the truth of salvation, and we will see that as we go along and so we will pass on with just that comment. One final word regarding the times of Isaiah before we look at the first chapter. Isaiah wrote this book over 2,000 years ago, approaching 3,000 years. You would think that something that was almost 3,000 years of age would be hopelessly out of date. But it isn't. In fact, the very things that we read in the prophecy of Isaiah are the things with which men are wrestling

today. Not only is that truth, not only is the condition in our land, similar to the condition in Isaiah's land. But conditions in the church of Jesus Christ today -- I am speaking of the professing church -- conditions in the professing church of Jesus Christ are so similar to conditions in Judah and in Israel that it's almost as if the prophecy were written a generation or so ago. The terms that were so vital then and their apostasy that was so rampant, these are the same truth that also vital today and so vitally needed and the apostasy that was rampant then is the apostasy that is rampant today. It's astonishing. I can only explain this by the fact that Isaiah was a man who was inspired of God and the Scriptures are profitable for teaching and they are profitable for teaching until the Lord comes.

On the international scene, Isaiah lived to see the rise and the coming to world kingdom of the great and cruel Assyrian power. We read much about Assyria in the early part of the book and we will talk about Assyria and the politics of Isaiah's day because it's found in his text as we move through. On the national scene, he lived through the lives of several of the kings. There was Asa, a good king, but who in his latter days committed a sin that caused him to live in a leper's house for the remainder of his days. Then there was Jotham a good king, but who also allowed the apostasy to continue in the land.

Then there was Ahaz, an evil and wicked king, a man who not only allowed the apostasy to deepen but aided it and helped it, a man who brought in through the apostasy. And then there was Hezekiah, a good king, but a king also who though responsible for revival, did not rid the land of the worship of the false gods. So, here is a man who lives in days that were outwardly good in which even godly men were on the throne but at the heart of the country of Judah and the city of Jerusalem apostasy was gnawing. And when apostasy gnaws at the heart of the people, it's not long before its fruits shall be seen. Now unfortunately, it's not always seen in the outbreaking kinds of sin that we expect. One of satan's devices in deceasing us is to make us think that sin is only the outbreaking type of sin whereas in the word of God, sin is unbelief, lack of trust

in the Lord. And unbelief and lack of trust in the Lord may exist in the most outwardly religious -- as we say, in the most outwardly religious circumstances. It may exist right in the church where the Bible is read, where men of God speak about the things of God, apostasy may exist right there. In fact, in the formalism and unreality of the facade, it is there that God often is most angered and we will see that.

So, let's look now at the opening chapter, it is as Professor Diehlisch, the German [called it] "The Great Arraignment." And here we have a court scene. Judah is before the judge. God is the judge. The witness is the Prophet. The assistants of God are the heavens and the earth. And we will discover that God is also the plaintiff and he brings the charge. And then he answers the defense with his rebuttal. And finally he will offer mercy and grace, which apparently is rejected, and the chapter concludes with his sentence. It's a remarkable chapter. It's one I would suggest you read a number of times and think of a law court as you do. Let's read now, verses 2 and 3. Chapter 1: verse 1 is an introduction not only to chapters 2 through 12, the first section of the book, but an introduction to the entire book.

Now we have the indictment in verses 2 and 3. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." By the way, this is the trial at law but the controversy that God has is a personal one. They have rebelled against me. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." I wish that we had time to look back at Deuteronomy chapter 32. For Isaiah the Prophet was a student of Scripture. Though he himself did not have all of the Old Testament, of course, it had not been written, he apparently had Moses' Law and he was a man who had read the Book of Deuteronomy.

In fact, he was greatly enamored of the 32nd of Deuteronomy. Will you turn back just for a moment? In fact, I feel quite sure that he had read this chapter a number of times and as he began his prophecy, he is thinking a great deal of Deuteronomy chapter

32. Let's read chapter 31: verses 28 and 29 first. You remember that Moses now is about to give God's last words to the children of Israel before they go into the land and in Deuteronomy chapter 31 and verse 28, we read, "Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them."

Now you will notice that what God is saying is, I am going to give some words to Israel and I'm going to call heaven and earth as witnesses to what I am going to say to them and Moses you are responsible for giving this message to them. For I know, Moses says, that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days; because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. Deuteronomy 32: verse 1, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." And then there follows this wonderful picture in Deuteronomy 32 which is a divine forecast of the whole history of the Jewish people. And in Deuteronomy 32 God tells, Israel through Moses how they are going into the land, they are going to be disobedient, it's going to be necessary for him to judge them, finally they are going to be dispersed to the four corners of the earth, but ultimately they are going to be brought back into the land and they are going to be blessed because they belong to Jehovah.

But Isaiah writes during the process, and so it's not startling that he says to them in their sin, Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth -- you see, he has read Deuteronomy and like Moses, he is giving them a reminder of where they stand before God. It's just as if a prophet should stand before you tonight and say to you, now I am going to give you a message from God which belongs to you in Dallas, Texas and then he were to give us this message and he were to say, now this message is a message that you are to remember and you are to continually read and ponder and you are to make it your very life, you in Dallas. And then a hundred years later, after Dallas has forgotten all about the

message from God, there should rise someone else who calls them back to the message that God had given, and so Isaiah reminds Israel of how God has spoken to them, and warned them and admonished them of the things that would happen to them when they departed from Him. I've nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me.

You know, it's bad to depart from God under any circumstances. But for the children of God to depart from Him, for those who had been called unto special relationship with Him, for the nation had been, for them to depart, how terrible that is. It, of course, is terrible for the man who has never heard of Jesus Christ to depart from God. But for the man who has grown up in a Christian home and who has heard the things of Jesus Christ, who has been brought into a Christian church and has heard the glories of the cross and the blood proclaimed, for him to depart, to never really put his trust in Jesus Christ, never really become a Christian but to go out to apostasy, that's really terrible.

One of the saddest things today is that this is happening throughout our land in our evangelical churches. It has happened in many of the great churches, our best known churches. We all know that. But it's happening in those that have risen as a protest against those great churches for it's a process that goes on all the time in the people of God. How wicked is the human heart. It always departs from God. Isaiah is a great painter of pictures. The ox knows its owner, the ass its masters crib, but my people, they don't know, they don't even consider. One of the Scottish preachers that I have liked to read through the years is W.T.P. Wolston. He was a business man or a lawyer, I've forgotten which. But he became a preacher of the word and a very effective one in the City of Edinburgh.

In one of his messages he tells the story of a man who was not a Christian but who had a Christian family. His wife was a Christian. His children attended the church. But he was not a Christian. He had been brought up with a great deal of scriptural knowledge as many Britishers have and particularly Scots. But when Sunday came

around, it was the worst day of the week for him because everybody went to church and he stayed at home and he used to go into fits of depression while they were gone. One day he said that in a fit of depression, he just decided he would get out of the house and walk out in the field which was back of his house and he walked out and he wandered under a tree where there was some shade and leaned up against a fence. And while he was there, one of the old cows that was nearby came over and stood by him and finally leaned up and nestled his arm and a text of Scripture came to his mind. You know what it was? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

He said, by Jove, the ox knows more about God than I do. You know, in Joel that's just the picture we get too. Because there in Joel as the judgments of God are poured out, it is the animals that recognize that God is judging but the people do not. And so Israel, you have rebelled against me. This is the indictment that comes from God. Isaiah at this point steps forward as evidence -- to give the evidence for the prosecution and you will notice the Prophet speaks now.

In verse 9, we read, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant." So Jehovah's words end for a moment and the pained Prophet speaks. Do you know in Hebrew the words are very interesting it's "*boy goy*, ah sinful nation, *boy goy boteab* nation that sins, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." Did you notice something? I've noticed this about the word of God, the Bible loves sevens and threes. Preachers love threes and sevens. There is a reason for it. Seven in the Bible is the number of completeness. It very often appears in contexts with that fours and it does here. Here is a sevenfold description of the wickedness of Judah. It would be nice if we had an opportunity to expound all of the points of it but I just want you to notice this, the fifth, sixth, and seventh points describe

the apostasy of the land. They have provoked, they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Apostasy in heart, apostasy in words, apostasy in action. I think in Isaiah's day, the apostasy that he saw was the kind of apostasy that the nation probably expressed some surprise there. I would imagine that when Isaiah spoke these words they were shocked. Many of his words are addressed to the upper class, to the wealthy, and to the cultured. And I am sure that they must have thought that Isaiah the Prophet should have known better and to give such uncouth words in description of them. But look at them, they have forsaken the Lord, apostasy in heart. They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, apostasy in words. And they are gone away backward, they've left him, apostasy in action.

And if I were to say today to you that the church of Jesus Christ is apostate in heart, in words, in action, would you be shocked? But it is, it is. We have forsaken the Lord. We have blasphemed the Holy One of Israel. We've spoken of Jesus Christ for example, as if He were just another person as such as we are, perhaps on a higher level, but still a human being and he is the Holy One of Israel. And we have gone away backward in action, so that today the church is the place not where the word of God is proclaimed but where people gather to neglect it.

Now I just read the words, why should you be stricken any more, you will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and whole heart faint from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They've not been closed, neither bound up neither mollified with ointment to show you that you are under divine judgment, your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your land foreigners devour it in your presence and it is desolate, is overthrown by foreigners. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city, except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant.

And in the Hebrew text that's very, very emphatic. A remnant that is just a little bit. We should have been like Sodom, and we should have been like under Gomorrah and only a little handful came out of Sodom and none came from Gomorrah. In Judah and Jerusalem there was only a remnant left that had not departed from God in heart, in words, in action. Now you can just imagine the people. Their words are not given of course. The Prophet does not tell us what they said. Whether he gave them a chance or not, we do not know. But obviously he knows what they are going to say and so he gives a rebuttal.

And here God speaks through the Prophet and the rebuttal that is given in verses 10 through 17, is the rebuttal to their words of self vindication, which they no doubt gave. And if I may reconstruct the scene and I think you will realize as you read this chapter over and over that it must be very similar to this, that what they would say to Isaiah's words is this, Isaiah you have made some very strong accusations. You've said we've left the Lord. You've said that we are apostates. You've said that we blaspheme God. You say we don't care anything about Him. But Isaiah, on the Sabbath Day, will you notice the temple? Will you notice that we crowd the temple? Did you know the church attendance has never been better than it has been in our day? Will you notice how many sacrifices are killed? Do you notice how many people are there, in fact we're just treading the courts of the temple constantly? Will you notice too that there are men who are praying all the time, our prayers go up, we pray, we go to church, we give. We are very religious, Isaiah. That was their line of defense. You know sometimes after I've read the prophets and then I talk with people who are just nominal Christians. I must confess it really shatters. It shatters me. Because the same kind of thing is said today when individuals are thoroughly ignorant of the fact that all their doing is saying in 1968 the things that Israel said 2,700 years ago.

Are you interested in Jesus Christ? I am a good church member. I was baptized by Dr. Trude 40 years ago. Talk about the things of the word of God and men talk about

their church. They talk about paying the preacher. They talk about putting money in the collection place. Well, that's just the ancient way of saying the things that are said here.

Now let's notice God's rebuttal. Here the word of the Lord, "ye rulers of Sodom." Isn't that interesting that Jerusalem is likened to Sodom? Jerusalem like Sodom? Yes, and in the Book of Revelation, you will read that very thing, Jerusalem, which is spiritually Sodom. "Give ear unto the law of our Lord of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." Suppose I were to stand up in believers chapel for those of you that come to believers chapel and I should speak to you like this, you should be offended, wouldn't you? Suppose I should say to you and I want to say to you, you people of Sodom and you people of Gomorrah, you'll be kind of upset. I don't want God to speak of me that way.

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord." By the way, in the Hebrew, that's [indistinct] your mare, which means apparently that he had said this incessantly to them. Saith the Lord, "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot bear; it is iniquity, even the church meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth." Look at that.

Did you realize that not only is God not pleased sometimes with what we do in church, but sometimes it angers him? "They are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." We get up Sunday morning and we sort of glibly talk about our prayer, hearing and answering God sometimes when God doesn't hear the prayers of men. "Your hands are full of blood, wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

If I were to sum this up, we could sum it up in this way by just saying wickedness and worship for that's what it is. Iniquity, wickedness, even the solemn meeting, worship, and you know that Hebrew word for the solemn meeting is a word that looks at a group of people who crowd into a place so that they are horribly standing room. And so you have the picture of great crowds that press into the temple area in order to offer their sacrifices, in order to tread the courts of the temple and it's all vanity. It's emptiness. That's the word he uses, emptiness. So we brag about our church attendance.

Now I want to say a word or two, too, to some in our evangelical churches too. I am quite sure that what Isaiah has in mind is an apostate situation. And so he has in mind, a church, which denies the fundamentals of the Christian faith, which are that Jesus Christ is the son of God, that He has offered himself upon the cross at Calvary, a sacrifice before God, which satisfies his justice and his holiness, and upon the basis of which God freely offers eternal life to all who will simply believe. That's the full message. That's the good news. That He was raised from the dead, that He ascended to the right hand of God, that he shall come again, that He shall establish his kingdom, that those who put their trust in him are preserved into this presence and live there forever more. Those are the Christian facts and I am sure that he has in mind an organization, which denies those fundamental things but still carries on outwardly all of its meetings, its Sunday school, its morning worship, its evening meeting, its prayer meeting, all of its women's meetings, all of its men's meetings, all of its special meetings, all of its festivals like Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving, and all of the rest and God says it's emptiness, emptiness, in fact iniquity, your solemn meeting.

But let me say this. While I think that's primarily what he has in mind, don't forget that that great organization into which thousands of people crowd today was one time a little organization of simple-hearted Christian believers who had bowed before the cross and had acknowledged the love of God in Jesus Christ, and had been one to him, and had called him Lord, and who taught those truths to their children and to their

children's children, but departure came. There was a cooling of ardor. There was a love for other things instead of the Scriptures, a love for pleasure perhaps more than a love for Jesus Christ, and as these things came, the children noticed. They saw that mother and father were not living by faith, so why should they? And it wasn't long before faith was gone but they still carried out the outward. And I am so afraid in our evangelical churches throughout this land that we are in a process just like this. And oh, let me tell you there is nothing that can possibly stay there and turn it except what Isaiah calls upon Israel to do and that is to repent. Brought by the spirit of God an acknowledgement of where we have gone and are pleading with him to bring us back, and it's wonderful to know that he is always ready to do it.

You will notice that when Isaiah speaks about the specific things that they are to do in verses 16 and 17, they are all very practical. In fact there are eight admonitions in verses 16 and 17. I have often wondered why they are so practical and I think the reason is this, we can kid ourselves that we are back when we are not. We can get down on our knees and say, "Oh! God, I have sinned." Even Pharaoh can say that, and Saul can say that, and Judas said that. "I've sinned and I've betrayed the innocent blood", and we think we are back. But there are always some outward tests and here they are. Now today, I think the outward tests come when a man gets down upon his knees and gets back in to fellowship of God by confession of his sin and then the practical tests of love for the saints of God, of practical care for them and for their needs. These are the things that mark out the genuine repentance.

Now Donald Grey Barnhouse who led me to the Lord used to tell the story of a butcher who is converted. Someone said to him, "What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?" He said, "I no longer weigh my thumb." He had been weighing his thumb. He said he got almost an ounce, an extra ounce out of that thumb but he managed to just let kind of hangover the meat. And he said ever afterwards, he didn't weigh his thumb.

And when those came in whom he had wronged, he added one ounce for his thumb thereafter. That's what I think Isaiah has in mind here, some of those practical things.

Now there is an appeal from God in verses 18 through 20. Someone has said that this is the basis of Linden's philosophy, consensus philosophy, but this is a far cry from Linden's philosophy, I assure you. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord." If, I think, if the Hebrew is the word *iyim*, which means "if", "though" is not bad, but "if" alike, "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Wrath passes the love of God breaks through fully here and God offers to the nation that has so angered him with its formal worship, he offers them a full and free forgiveness. "Though your sins be a scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be like wool." Always that offering is open to any man who would come.

Now you know me, you know that I believe in election. But I do not know who the elect are and so you may come. If you have never come to Christ and have been saved, have become a Christian, you may come and he will welcome you. If you are a Christian, out of fellowship with God, he will come, he will welcome you, if you come. He is always anxious to do it. You don't have to go back and knock on God's door. It's open always. And he welcomes you.

Now then how would you think Israel should respond? Apparently, Isaiah feels that they rejected the offer of God because in verses 21 through 23, he writes as if there is no response. "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" Instead of being the wife of Jehovah, she has given her charms to other gods, a harlot, a spiritual harlot. You know what a spiritual harlot is? A spiritual harlot is one who has acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior but who loves the world. That's right. That is precisely what the word of God says. James calls us adulterers and adulteresses, if we love the world. So, the

faithful city has become a harlot. There is no hope for Israel. She is still far a gone. "It was full of justice, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Thy silver has become dross, Thy wine mixed with water; Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."

Now I would say just one thing about this. It is obvious that the word of God has no effect on Judah. And in our day, we are fast approaching the day in which the word of God may be read with no proper response in the Christian church. In fact a preacher whom I respect quite a bit has likened the situation in the church of Jesus Christ today to a limited constitutional monarchy.

I lived in Britain for a couple of years and I was always amused by the way they thought of the Queen and the Prince. You know they think of the Queen or the King, as the case maybe, as a kind of symbol, is a rallying point. They really like the idea. They have a lot of fun with the idea of having a Queen or a King. It's sort of a symbol of Britain. But she or he doesn't really mean anything at all. As a matter of fact, when any decision is to be made, no one consults the Queen. No one consults the King. The decisions are made by the men of the State. And so while they all rally around the Queen, it's someone else who makes the decision.

It's like that in the church of Jesus Christ too. We acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord but who makes the decision in the local church. We sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name." That's our soul and the Cross is our flag but who makes the decisions? Is it Jesus Christ? Or bring in a little closer. Who makes the decisions in your life? You see the problem with Judah is the problem we have, isn't it? We name him but is he really the one who makes the decisions. Well, here is the sentence. I will just read it, because time's up. Verse 24 through 31, the sentence is simply this, "Unfortunately because you've not responded, judgment is coming. But through judgment, there shall come purification

because you remember those ancient promises I made to Abraham, I will not forget them. But you shall only come to them through the judgment of God.

Listen, "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, ah, I will rid myself of mine adversaries, and avenge myself of mine enemies for that's what you have become. And I will turn mine hand upon Thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin; and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou should be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks, which they have desired, with reference to the idols, and you shall be confounded for the gardens that you have chosen. For you shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as wick, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." God's judgments shall be responsible for the sweeping away of this generation into perdition. But God's promises are invaluable, and ultimately through judgment, He will bring the nation to the place of blessing. Let's close and pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the word of God and help us as we continue to study the Prophecy of Isaiah to read it as if its message were for us. For Jesus sake, Amen