

# Isaiah 1:1 - 2:5 Rebellion and Redemption

**Launcher:** What has been memorable so far in your learning from the book of Isaiah?

*With the Intro. to Isaiah last week, Sunday's sermon and personal Bible reading, some will have made a good start on the book of Isaiah already. But for this study, I'm not assuming a lot of prior knowledge. One of the goals for this study is to get everyone 'up to speed' for the rest of our Term's study in Isaiah.*

## The Big Picture

*When I use the Street Directory or Google Maps, the first page I look at is the one which gives me the 'big picture'. Only once I've got the 'big picture' am I ready for the detail. Likewise with Isaiah it is important to keep in mind the 'big picture' before entering into the detail. Interestingly enough the first verse of the book gives us the big picture ...*

Read **Isaiah 1:1**

What do we learn about the book from this verse?

*It is called 'the vision' - as well as telling us that the message of this book comes from God, as an insight into spiritual Reality, this implies a unified, single, 'vision' that embraces all the different themes and songs of the book.*

*The vision concerns Judah and Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>. It is about the people of God and the City of God. This people and this city had a high calling and a central place in the plans and the promises of God. It is no surprise then that the book begins and ends with Jerusalem. As we read this, we should be asking questions like ... 'Have Judah and Jerusalem lived up to God's calling?', 'What place will they have in God's plans now and in the future?' etc.*

What is the significance of *when* Isaiah had his vision'?

*Isaiah had his vision during the reigns of Uzziah, etc.. .They were the kings of Judah, the powerbrokers, the ones who in many senses seemed to control the destiny of the nation. It is in the midst of their ruling that Isaiah has the vision of God's intervention in history.*

*At this point it would be valuable for you to familiarise yourself with the events that*

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<sup>1</sup> Judah and Jerusalem can be used interchangeably. Judah is the region of which Jerusalem (also called Zion) is the capital, After the Jews fled Egypt (1300 BC) and entered the Promised Land they were initially united as one nation called Israel. This one nation was made up of 12 tribes. After Solomon died the Nation was split into two (925 BC). The Southern region was called Judah (its capital was Jerusalem), and the Northern region was called Israel (its capital was Samaria). The two regions were still referred to collectively as 'Israel' even after their division, When the northern region was destroyed by Assyria (722BC) Judah could still be referred to as Israel (because it now represented all the Jews who remained).

*surrounded these kings. Much of Isaiah assumes you will know these characters and the events that surrounded them. Here's a quick summary (and you might like to give this background briefly to your group):*

*At the time of Uzziah ( or Azariah) the dominant power was Assyria (capital = Ninevah). Uzziah's reign was during a period of relative peace and prosperity for Judah as Assyria was battling with internal problems. His son Jotham came to power just as Assyria began fresh military campaigns under the leadership of Tiglath Pileser III. The events that unfolded were as follows:*

*1. Damascus (the capital of Syria) and Samaria (the capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel) ask Jotham and his successor Ahaz to join them in resisting Assyrian military advances.*

*2. Isaiah advises Judah to remain neutral. This results in Israel trying to overthrow Judah and install a puppet king in Jerusalem. Judah survives this first onslaught, and Ahaz (king of Judah) then asks Assyria for help! He submits himself to Assyria and is forced to pay huge amounts of protection money to Assyria. Assyria obliges by wiping out Damascus (732 BC) and then Samaria (the capital of Israel). Ahaz effectively sells out to the Assyrians and adopts many of their religious practices.*

*Hezekiah who is the king after Ahaz is a different character again. His rebellion against Assyria brought Jerusalem to the brink of destruction. We will meet him again in ch38.*

**Main points so far:**

® *The opening verse describes the contents of the book as a single vision. It tells us whose vision it is and the period in which Isaiah exercised his prophetic ministry.*

® *In the days of the 4 kings mentioned here and in an increasingly vulnerable situation, Isaiah saw by Divine revelation what God was doing in history. He lay behind the rise and the fall of the nations. Everything was under his sovereign control. He was taking history where he wanted it to go.*

1:1-2:5 describes in miniature the movement of the whole book. In chapter 1 the emphasis is on judgement, in 2:1-5, salvation. Ch I looks at the present corrupt Jerusalem, 2:1-5 at the final restored Jerusalem (Zion).

**Read 1:2-31**

What does it say about the people that God had brought up?

So, how would you describe the condition of Jerusalem/Judah/Israel?

**Read Isaiah 66:17-24**

What does it say about the people of God'?

*Thus the book begins with the historical Jerusalem of Isaiah's own day, corrupt and under judgement (1:8) and ends with the end time city of God, the new Jerusalem, the joy and delight of the whole earth (66:17-19). It begins with the heavens and earth being summoned to listen (1:2), and ends with a new heavens and new earth (65:17-25; 66:22). The scope of this book is huge, it begins with the people of God as they are in Isaiah's day and ends with them as a people worshipping God in a whole new creation! The question of how this massive transformation is to take place is the subject and purpose of the rest of the book!*

**Think hard ...**

1. How do you think a corrupt people rejected by God could end up a holy, repentant people?
2. Whose work is this new creation?

**Now the details ...**

Consider again **Isaiah 1:2-31**

1. what is the peoples rebellion? What have they done which is so offensive?
2. what *has* resulted from their rebellion? What *will* result if they persist in rebellion?
3. Does the Lord offer any alternatives to judgement?

**Think hard ...**

Many have a 'cuddly' view of God, someone whose presence we can just waltz into. Some have an angry God who loves to hate. How does this passage shed light on the correct attitude?

**"I cannot bear your evil assemblies... when you spread out your hands in prayer I will hide my eyes from them"** (vv13,14). What kind of 'worship' is acceptable to God? (see also John 4:23-24, Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 9:14)

We see in this passage that God is both just and merciful. His justice means he will break and destroy sinners, his mercy means he loves to forgive those same sinners. Where do we see God's justice and his mercy fully displayed?

*The answer is of course the cross. There we see God's justice and mercy kiss. God is just in that he does not let sin go unpunished, he is merciful in that he himself takes the punishment that we deserve so that now we are free from guilt (1Peter 3:18). Joined*

*with Christ by faith we are now considered righteous before Him, our sin has been dealt with once for all time.*

*In terms of the book of Isaiah the movement of the book is from a sinful and corrupt people (ch 1) to a people who are holy (ch66). This comes about not through their own work but by the work of the servant who we meet in the second half of the book. This servant was pierced for their transgressions; he bore the sin of many (see Isaiah 53). He is punished for the sin of the people. It is his work that brings about the transformation of Jerusalem and ultimately the universe. It is no surprise to us that we see Jesus being called this servant (see Matt. 12:18ff and I Peter 2:22ff).*

### **Read Isaiah 2:1-5**

*Whilst Chapter 1 showed Jerusalem as it was at the time of Isaiah's vision, Chap. 2:1-5 looks forward to what Jerusalem will one day be like. It is a peep into the future, of the final state of affairs - the last days.*

1. What is the significance of the mountain of the Lord's temple being raised up above the hills and all the nations streaming to it?

2. What image is the passage conveying to us?

*Isaiah sees the day when one holy mountain stands supreme over all others. The mountain of the Lord's temple is a picture of God's rule, his kingdom. One day God will clearly be seen to be ruler of the world, he will be seen to be supreme over all others. His rule results in universal peace (v4), but this occurs only as the word of the Lord is heard and obeyed. Peace on any other terms is a delusion.*

3. In view of **this future outcome** how are the people **instructed** to live? (v5)