



ISAIAH

Week 6: Isaiah, Chapters 3-5

Trusted. Obedient. Prophetic.

Winter 2023 w/Wednesday Night Crew

1/25 – Ch.1

2/1 – Ch. 2 Mill.Reign

2/8

2/15 – Gone PR ROBIN

2/22 – Home Tues. Gone?

3/1

3/8 – Gone

3/15

3/22

3/29

4/5

4/12 – Gone

4/19

4/26

5/3 – Gone

5/10 – Home night prior

5/17

5/24

5/31

RECAP:

SL#3

RECAP PR. ROBIN'S



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NOTE: Amos & Hosea were preaching repentance to Israel (Northern Kingdom) at this time.

When Hope & WOE/Doom/Judgment Co-exist...Or....

Isaiah Chapters 3-5

CHAPTER 3

SL#4

Isaiah 3:1-15

Now the Lord God of heavenly forces is removing from Jerusalem and from Judah every form of support:

- 1.) all rations of food and water;
- 2.) ² soldier and warrior;
- 3.) judge and prophet;
- 4.) fortune-teller and elder;
- 5.) ³ commander and celebrity;
- 6.) counselor,
- 7.) clever craftsman, and
- 8.) cunning charmer. CEB

For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, Takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah

The stock and the store,

- 1.) The whole supply of bread and of water;
- 2.) ² The mighty man and the man of war,
- 3.) The judge and the prophet,
- 4.) And the diviner and the elder;
- 5.) ³ The captain of 50 and the honorable man,
- 6.) The counselor and
- 7.) the skillful artisan,
- 8.) And the expert enchanter. NKJV

SL#5

What happens to the “**Restraining Force**” in the End Times:

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

Brothers and sisters, we have a request for you concerning our Lord Jesus Christ’s coming and when we are gathered together to be with him. ²We don’t want you to be easily confused in your mind or upset if you hear that the day of the Lord is already here, whether you hear it through some spirit, a message, or a letter supposedly from us. ³Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. That day won’t come unless the rebellion comes first and the person who is lawless is revealed, who is headed for destruction. ⁴He is the opponent of every so-called god or object of worship and promotes himself over them. So he sits in God’s temple, displaying himself to show that he is God. ⁵You remember that I used to tell you these things while I was with you, don’t you?

⁶Now you know what holds him back so that he can be revealed when his time comes. ⁷The hidden plan to live without any law is at work now, but it will be secret only until the one who is holding it back is out of the way.

GRIEVANCE/OBJECTION LIST from the LORD in today’s language:

[a.k.a. Signs of coming Judgment] HOW MANY CAN WE FIND: vs.8-15

SL#6

⁴ I will make youths their commanders; mischief makers will rule over them.

⁵ The people will oppress each other, each one against the other, neighbor against neighbor.

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The young will bully the old,
the rogue, and the respectable.

⁶Someone will seize a family member, saying, “You have clothing! You be our leader!
This mess will be your responsibility!”

⁷Someone else will cry out on that day,
“I’m no healer!

I have neither food nor clothing in my house!
Don’t make me the leader of the people!”

⁸Yes, Jerusalem has stumbled
and Judah has fallen,

FIVE OBJECTIONS:

1. No guilt, no remorse
2. No understanding or “respect” for sin.

BECAUSE the way they talk and act in word and deed insults the Lord, defying his brilliant glory. [DEFYING HIS PRESENCE AND EXISTENCE]

⁹Their **bias in judgment** gives them away;
like Sodom, they **display their sins in public.**
Doom to them, for they have done themselves in!

¹⁰Tell the righteous how blessed they are; they will eat the fruit of their labors.

Eating the fruits of their sinful behavior:

- A. ¹¹ **Doom to the wicked; they are evil.**
What they have done will be done to them.
- B. ¹² As for my people—**oppressors strip them and swindlers rule them.**
- C. My people—your **leaders mislead you and confuse your paths.**

¹³The Lord arises to accuse; he stands to judge the peoples.

¹⁴The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people:

FIVE OBJECTIONS cont.:

3. Used the resources for yourself.
4. And then taken what the poor had
5. Oppress others for your gain

You yourselves have **devoured the vineyard;**
the **goods stolen from the poor** are in your houses.

¹⁵How dare you **crush my people** [OPPRESSION]
and **grind the faces of the poor?**
says the Lord God of heavenly forces. CEB

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v.s. 16-17 oracle annnc who and then a judgment. 18-4:1 judgment defined
HOW DID THEY GET THIS FINERY? V.S. 15 OPPRESSION OF THE POOR

SL#7

16-26

¹⁶ The Lord says:

Because Zion's daughters applaud themselves,
walking with their chins in the air,
flirting with their eyes,
tiptoeing as they walk, feet jingling—

¹⁷ the Lord will shave the heads of Zion's
daughters,
and will expose their scalps.

¹⁸ On that day, the Lord will remove:
the splendid ankle chains; headbands and
moon-shaped pendants;

¹⁹ the earrings, bracelets, and veils;

²⁰ the hats, bangles, and sashes;

the amulets and charms;

²¹ the signet rings and nose rings;

²² the robes and capes;
the shawls and handbags;

²³ the mirrors and linen garments;
the turbans and the veils.

²⁴ Instead of perfume there will be a disgusting odor;
instead of a sash, a rope;
instead of styled hair, shaved heads;
instead of expensive clothes, rags as mourning
clothes;
instead of beauty, shame.

²⁵ Your men will fall by the sword,
your warriors in battle!

²⁶ Her gates will lament and mourn;
desolate, she will sit on the ground.

4:1 *And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach."*

Are the women singled out here? Of course – they are being held liable

[being held accountable along with those who procured the finery]

Vs 25 – Married. Where did they get this finery?

As a result of the siege and fall of Zion, these women of Zion will suffer:

- disfiguring disease (17a),
- sexual abuse (17b), - result of slavery = shaved head [as noted in the Code of Hammurapi] (hăm'ə-ră'bē, hă'moo-)
- captivity (a rope, 24),
- and bereavement (25).
- In desperation these proud women will finally be reduced to throwing themselves at any surviving male who will have them (4:1).¹

Vs. 4:1 We will take care of ourselves just give us TRIBE.
I do not expect you to value me....

¹ Webb, B. (1996). *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings* (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; pp. 50–51). Inter-Varsity Press.

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3:18 *bangles*. The ankle bracelets mentioned in v. 16. *headbands*. Ornaments resembling or representing the sun, showing Egyptian influence. They are common in Israelite seals. *crescent necklaces*. Like the moon, possibly showing influence from the moon-god of Harran or from the Canaanites at Ugarit.

3:20 *headdresses*. Or turbans; were worn by Israel and her neighbors. *perfume bottles*. It is hard to imagine these serving as an item of clothing, so they are possibly a type of amulet, paralleling the “charms” mentioned next (cf. the same root, “whispering,” in v. 3 [“enchanter”]). These items have been found in excavations.

3:21 *signet rings*. Or seal rings; used by some officials as a symbol of authority and worn on the finger. They left an impression when pressed into a clay writing tablet (see note on 1Ki 21:8). Other rings were worn in the nose.

3:24 *well-dressed hair*. Hair not only distinguished individuals, as it does to today, but ethnic groups could be discerned by their differing hairstyles. Elaborate hairstyles were worn by gods and leaders in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Nice hair was prized, as shown by a text describing someone as “provided with beautiful hair.” Included among other gifts in a letter from Amarna were “29 silver ladles, with boxwood and ebony handles, which are for curling hair.” *baldness*. See note on v. 17.

3:26 *sit on the ground*. Extreme emotion is debilitating, affecting the ability to stand. Utnapishtim experienced this when he saw the destruction of his fellow human beings after the flood in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. He said, “Consequently I crouched, I sat down, I wept.”

4:1

disgrace. **Points toward a societal rather than an economic lack**. This word occurs in the context of rape, an unfortunate concomitant of war. The women are seeking either protection from such violation or a return of status to women who have already been raped and so humiliated—a state shared by a woman who was widowed (54:4).²

Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture](#) (pp. 1115–1116). Zondervan.

Questions:

- These are horrible, and hard truths being spoken.
 - How would I react to this being said to me?
 - Have I ever been asked to confront another with hard truth?

- What do I embrace as valuable? [TIME. TREASURE. TALENT] Why?
- What does it convey that I am embracing its value?
- Is it truly valuable?

² Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture](#) (pp. 1115–1116). Zondervan.

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CHAPTER 4

Short Chapter!

Why inserted here in the structure of Isaiah? [HOPE]

[I sometimes wonder if Isaiah needed to speak **HOPE** in between the **judgment/DOOM** for his own heart?]. (IS THIS AN ONGOING CONVERSATION IN PROPHECY TODAY?)

SL#8

Isaiah 4:2-6

² On that day, **the Lord's branch** will become beautiful and glorious. The earth's fruit will be the pride and splendor of Israel's survivors. ³ Whoever remains in Zion and is left in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who is on the list of those living in Jerusalem. ⁴ When the Lord washes the filth from Zion's daughters, and cleanses Jerusalem's bloodguilt from within it by means of a wind of judgment and a searing wind,⁵ then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the light of a blazing fire by night. Over all the glory there will be a canopy,⁶ which will be a booth by day for shade from the heat and a hiding place and shelter from a stormy downpour.

SL#9

BRANCH as an Image:

- Of kings descended from royal ancestors (Ezek. 17:3, 10; Dan. 11:7);
- Of prosperity (Job 8:16);
- Of the Messiah (see below) (Isa. 4:2; 11:1) (Jer. 23:5; 33:15) (Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

BRANCH is also used to describe:

- The Disciples relationship to Christ (**John 15:5-6**)

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything. ⁶ If you don't remain in me, you will be **like a branch** that is thrown out and dries up. Those branches are gathered up, thrown into a fire, and burned.

"The branch of the terrible ones" (Isa. 25:5) is rightly translated in the Revised Version "the song of the terrible ones," i.e., the song of victory shall be brought low by the destruction of Babylon and the return of the Jews from captivity.

- The "abominable branch" is a tree on which a malefactor[criminal] has been hanged (Isa. 14:19).
- The "highest branch" in Ezek. 17:3 represents Jehoiakim the king.³

Easton, M. G. (1893). In [Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature](#) (p. 107). Harper & Brothers.

[are there any Messianic attributes the we "inherit"?)

The Day of the Branch combines the

Present when the Remnant Returns:

And Messianic future:

- The Branch of the Lord **first appears** in Isaiah 4:2 as a Messianic figure of speech.
[Cursory look]

³ Easton, M. G. (1893). In [Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature](#) (p. 107). Harper & Brothers.

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SL#10

Isaiah 4:2

On that day, the Lord's branch will become beautiful and glorious.
The earth's fruit will be the pride and splendor of Israel's survivors.

SL#11

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse;
a branch will sprout from his roots.
**²The Lord's spirit will rest upon him,
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of planning and strength,
a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.**

[Do we inherit a FORM OF this?]

³ He will delight in fearing the Lord.
He won't judge by appearances,
nor decide by hearsay.

⁴ He will judge the needy with righteousness,
and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land.
He will strike the violent with the rod of his mouth;
by the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.

⁵ **Righteousness** will be the belt around his hips, [we inherit HIS righteousness]
and faithfulness the belt around his waist.

⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the

young goat;
the calf and the young lion will feed together,
and a little child will lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear will graze.
Their young will lie down together,
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.

⁸ A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.

⁹ They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.

The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,
just as the water covers the sea.

A signal to the peoples

¹⁰ On that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a signal to the peoples. The nations will seek him out, and his dwelling will be glorious.

- In Isa 11:1 the Hebrew reads *nēšer*, ("shoot" or "descendant"). In the others it is *šemaḥ*, ("sprout," "growth," or "branch").

Isa 11 describes the appearance of the Branch in the line of David (Jesse was David's father)—the Messiah's relationship with the Spirit of God (v. 2) and his ministry of setting all things right by bringing justice and righteousness to the earth (vv. 3–9).

Richards, L. O. (1999). In *New international encyclopedia of Bible words: based on the NIV and the NASB* (pp. 139–140). Zondervan Publishing House.

SL#12

Jeremiah 23:5-6

Promise of a righteous and just king

⁵ The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David's line, and he will rule as a wise [inherit His wisdom...learn?] king. He will do what is just and right in the land. ⁶ During his lifetime, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And his name will be The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

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- Jer 23 also emphasizes the ultimate role of the Messiah (vv. 5–6), and

Richards, L. O. (1999). In *New international encyclopedia of Bible words: based on the NIV and the NASB* (pp. 139–140). Zondervan Publishing House.

SL#13

Jeremiah 33:15-16

¹⁵ In those days and at that time, I will raise up a righteous branch from David's line, who will do what is just and right in the land. ¹⁶ In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

- Jer 33 is crucial in identifying the Branch as the one who was to fulfill the Davidic covenant (vv. 15–22).

Richards, L. O. (1999). In *New international encyclopedia of Bible words: based on the NIV and the NASB* (pp. 139–140). Zondervan Publishing House.

SL#14

Zechariah 3:8–10

Now listen, High Priest Joshua,

you and your companions sitting before you—
for these men are a sign—

look, I am about to bring my servant, Branch.

⁹ See this stone that I have put before Joshua.
Upon one stone, there are seven facets.

I am about to engrave an inscription on it,
says the Lord of heavenly forces.

I will remove the guilt of that land in one day.

¹⁰ On that day, says the Lord of heavenly forces,
everyone will invite their neighbors to sit beneath their vines and the fig trees." [PEACE]

SL#15

Zechariah 6:12-13

Say to him,

"The Lord of heavenly forces proclaims:

Here is a man. His name is Branch, and he will branch out from his place;
he will build the Lord's temple. ¹³ He will build the Lord's temple.

He will be majestic; he will **sit** and **rule** on his throne. [Authority & Power]

There will be a priest on his throne, and the two of them will share a peaceable plan.

- è **Covenant** Zec 3:9 emphasizes the removal of sins "in a single day" (v. 9), while 6:12 pictures reestablishment of the Lord's temple by one who is both priest and king. Jesus alone fits every description. Jesus alone fulfills every role. è **Christ**

Richards, L. O. (1999). In *New international encyclopedia of Bible words: based on the NIV and the NASB* (pp. 139–140). Zondervan Publishing House.

[Is there anything applicable to us as Disciples now?]

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CHAPTER 5 (a restating of chapter 3)

SL#16

Song of the vineyard **Isaiah 5:1-7**

- **Vineyard Described:** [WE ARE HIS Vineyard...what image would we use if written today?]

5 Let me sing for my loved one
a love song for his vineyard.

My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. [HIS intent]

2 He dug it,
cleared away its stones,
planted it with excellent vines,
built a tower inside it,
and dug out a wine vat in it.

He expected it to grow good grapes—

but it grew rotten grapes. [Our response]

- **Owner's Intention for the Vineyard:**

3 So now, you who live in Jerusalem, you people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard:

4 What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I haven't done for it?

When I expected it to grow good grapes,
why did it grow rotten grapes?

5 Now let me tell you what I'm doing to my vineyard.

I'm removing its hedge, [Hedge = hope. Removal = Judgment/Doom]
so it will be destroyed.

I'm breaking down its walls,
so it will be trampled.

6 I'll turn it into a ruin;
it won't be pruned or hoed,
and thorns and thistles will grow up.

I will command the clouds not to rain on it.

- **Application to Judah:**

7 The vineyard of the Lord of heavenly forces is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah are the plantings in which God delighted. [He wishes to delight in us!]

God expected justice, [WHAT DOES HE EXPECT OF ME?]

but there was bloodshed; **righteousness**, but there was a cry of distress!

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SL#17

Hedge of Protection:

Job 1:9-10

⁹ Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Haven't you placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. CSB

Psalm 91:11

For he will give his angels orders concerning you,
to protect you in all your ways

Psalm 34:7

The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and rescues them.

Hosea 2:6

Yes, their mother is promiscuous;
she conceived them and acted shamefully.
For she thought, "I will follow my lovers,
the men who give me my food and water,
my wool and flax, my oil and drink."

⁶ Therefore, this is what I will do:

I will block her way with thorns;

I will enclose her with a wall,

so that she cannot find her paths.

⁷ She will pursue her lovers but not catch them;
she will look for them but not find them.

Then she will think,

"I will go back to my former husband,
for then it was better for me than now."

SL#18

Guardian Angels

Hebrews 1:14

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

Matthew 18:10

¹⁰ "See that you don't look down on one of these little ones, because I tell you that in heaven their angels continually view the face of My Father in heaven

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Since a Rotten Crop was Cultivated: **Sayings of Woe/Doom/Judgment**

SL#19

Isaiah 5:8-24

⁸ **WOE#1/Doom** to those who acquire house after house, who annex field to field until there is no more space left and only you live alone in the land. ⁹ I heard the Lord of heavenly forces say this:

Many houses will become total ruins, large, fine houses, with no one living in them.

¹⁰ Ten acres of vineyard will produce just one bath, and a homer of seed will produce only an ephah.

SUMMATION: GREED = Resulted in Judgment of Scarcity.

SL#20

¹¹ **WOE#2/Doom** to those who wake up early in the morning to run after beer, to those who stay up late, lit up by wine.

¹² They party with lyre and harp, tambourine, flute, and wine; but they ignore the Lord's work; they can't see what God is doing.

¹³ Therefore, my people go into exile since they didn't understand—their officials are dying of hunger; so many of them are dried up with thirst.

¹⁴ Therefore, the grave opens wide its jaws, opens its mouth beyond all bounds, and the splendid multitudes will go down, with all their uproar and cheering.

¹⁵ **Humanity will be humiliated**; each person laid low, the eyes of the exalted laid low.

¹⁶ But the Lord of heavenly forces will be exalted in justice, and the holy God will show himself holy in righteousness. ¹⁷ Lambs will graze as if in their pasture; young goats will feed among the ruins of the rich.

**SUMMATION: Revelry (party spirit) = Resulted in Judgment of Humiliation.
Self focused living(what fulfills me) = Self Centered living**

SL#21

¹⁸ **WOE#3/Doom** to those who drag guilt along with cords of fraud, and haul sin as if with cart ropes, ¹⁹ who say, "God should hurry and work faster so we can see; let the plan of Israel's holy one come quickly, so we can understand it."

SUMMATION:

What deceptions do I drag along...I am God's Boss/I can DEMAND from Him.

Taunting God: God is not real. God is not personal. God is not powerful.

Embracing deceptions as truth.

SL#21

²⁰ **WOE#4/Doom** to those who call evil good and good evil, who present darkness as light and light as darkness, who make bitterness sweet and sweetness bitter.

**SUMMATION: Deceptions...do I create deceptions to further my own agendas?
There is no such thing as sin.**

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SL#22

²¹ **WOE#5/Doom** to those who consider themselves wise, who think of themselves as clever.

SUMMATION: *Ahaz and his deal with Egypt. I can outsmart God. Self-Aggrandizement*

SL#22

²² **WOE#6/Doom** to the wine-swigging warriors, mighty at mixing drinks, ²³ who spare the guilty for bribes, and rob the innocent of their rights. ²⁴ Therefore, as a tongue of fire devours stubble, and as hay shrivels in a flame, so their roots will rot, and their blossoms turn to dust, for they have rejected the teaching of the Lord of heavenly forces, and have despised the word of Israel's holy one.

SUMMATION: Fraudulent/Thievery. Dishonorable Dishonest "Rotted Roots = Unethical.

God's powerful hand

²⁵ This is why the Lord's anger burned against the people: he extended his hand to strike them, the mountains trembled, and their corpses lay in the middle of the streets like dung.

Even then God's anger didn't turn away; God's hand was still extended. **[AWAITING OUR REPENTANCE]**

²⁶ God will raise a signal to a nation from far away and whistle to them from the end of the earth— now look— hurrying, swiftly they come!

²⁷ Not one is tired; not one stumbles; they don't rest or sleep; no belt is loose; no sandal broken;

²⁸ their arrows are sharp; all their bows drawn; their horses' hooves are like flint; their wheels like the whirlwind.

²⁹ Their roaring is like the lion; they roar like young lions; they growl, seize their prey, and carry it off, with no one to rescue. ³⁰ On that day, they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks toward the land, there's darkness. Tyre and the Nile will be darkened by the clouds.

SL#23 combined woes

Isaiah 5:8-24

- **WOE#1**

GREED = Resulted in Judgment of Scarcity.

- **WOE#2**

Revelry (party spirit) = Resulted in Judgment of Humiliation.

Self focused living(what fulfills me) = Self Centered living

- **WOE#3**

I am God's Boss/I can DEMAND from Him. Taunting God: God is not real. God is not personal. God is not powerful. Embracing deceptions as truth.

- **WOE#4**

Deceptions...do I create deceptions to further my own agendas? "There is no such thing as sin."

- **WOE#5**

I can outsmart God. Self-Aggrandizement

- **WOE#6**

Fraudulent/Thievery. Dishonorable Dishonest "Rotted Roots = Unethical.

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SL#24

APPLYING ISAIAH TO MY TODAY:

Have I heard God's voice of HOPE? Have I heard God's voice of WOE?

How marvelous is the world God has created for us. How horrible is the world that man has made.

QUESTIONS:

- Do I see the earth as filled with the glory of God (6:3)?
- My life is filled with (idols 2:8):
- How does haughty and proud look and behave (2:11):
- How do we bow down to the "work of our hands" (2:8): (my accomplishments)
Do my accomplishments cause me to rely more on what I can do than on what God says should be done?
Do my accomplishments cause me to question God's abilities?
- Do I know WHO I AM ? [Are we as simple with insight with which even an animal is endowed – knowing whose he is] (1:3). IS IT BASED ON WHOSE I AM?
OR WHAT I DO? WHAT I OWN? HOW I LOOK?

- Would I define corrupt as:
Taking a bribe. Stealing from innocent.

Would I define corrupt as:

Ignoring what is right by not saying anything as I hate conflict.

Letting someone be a bit of bully to others instead of calling them out on it.

How easy is it to be corrupt, acquitting the guilty[BULLY] for a bribe[NO CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT] and depriving the innocent of their rights (5:23).

- Do we defend the fatherless? Stand up for the widow(1:23)?
Am I involved with loving children whose parents are not able to?
Do I have true invested friendships with single adults?
- How do I use the wealth the LORD has blessed me with?
Do I make excuses for what I have? Do I have enough? Do I see His wealth?
The people are being crushed by the elders and princes, while the mansions of the wealthy contain the spoils of the poor (3:14).

Concept from: "The Prophets" by Abraham Joshua Heschel; Hendrickson Publishers, LLC. 6th Edition, 2021

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NOtes:

- The earth is filled with the glory of God (6:3).
- The land is filled with idols (2:8).
- Men are haughty and full of pride (2:11).
- Yet, they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made (2:8).
- They regard themselves as wise and shrewd (5:21).
- But are devoid of the simple insight with which even an animal is endowed – knowing whose he is (1:3).
- Princes are scoundrels (1:23).
- Judges are corrupt, acquitting the guilty for a bribe and depriving the innocent of his rights (5:23).
- They do not defend the fatherless, and the widow's case does not come to them (1:23).
- The people are being crushed by the elders and princes, while the mansions of the wealthy contain the spoils of the poor (3:14).

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Holy Spirit Restraint Leaving...

The Great Apostasy

2 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ **Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,* ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. NKJV

Brothers and sisters, we have a request for you concerning our Lord Jesus Christ's coming and when we are gathered together to be with him. ² We don't want you to be easily confused in your mind or upset if you hear that the day of the Lord is already here, whether you hear it through some spirit, a message, or a letter supposedly from us. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. That day won't come unless the rebellion comes first and the person who is lawless is revealed, who is headed for destruction. ⁴ He is the opponent of every so-called god or object of worship and promotes himself over them. So he sits in God's temple, displaying himself to show that he is God. ⁵ You remember that I used to tell you these things while I was with you, don't you? ⁶ **Now you know what holds him back so that he can be revealed when his time comes.** ⁷ **The hidden plan to live without any law is at work now, but it will be secret only until the one who is holding it back is out of the way.** ⁸ Then the person who is lawless

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will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath from his mouth. When the Lord comes, his appearance will put an end to him.⁹ When the person who is lawless comes, it will happen through Satan's effort, with all kinds of fake power, signs, and wonders.¹⁰ It will happen with every sort of wicked deception of those who are heading toward destruction because they have refused to love the truth that would allow them to be saved.¹¹ This is why God will send them an influence that will mislead them so that they will believe the lie.¹² The result will be that everyone will be judged who is not convinced by the truth but is happy with injustice. CEB

III. CONCERNING THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:1–12)

A. An Appeal for Stability (2:1, 2)

2:1 Paul now undertakes to correct a misunderstanding that had arisen in the minds of the saints **concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** and the Day of the Lord. The saints were suffering such severe persecution that it was easy for them to think that they were already in the first part of the Day of the Lord, i.e., the Tribulation Period. And rumors were floating around that the *apostle himself* believed and taught that the Day of the Lord had arrived! So he must set the record straight.

A crucial question arises in verse 1 concerning the small word which Paul uses: **concerning** (Gk. *huper*). The problem is whether he is beseeching the saints "about" **the coming of our Lord** or "by" **the coming of our Lord**. If the first is the meaning, then the passage seems to teach that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord are one and the same event, since the following verses clearly deal with the Day of the Lord. If the second is the meaning, then Paul is appealing to them *on the basis of* the prior Rapture, that they should not think they were in the Day of the Lord. The question is debatable. We agree with William Kelly when he adopts the second view:

The comfort of the Lord's coming is employed as a motive and means for counteracting the uneasiness created by the false presentation that the day (of the Lord) was there.

We understand Paul to be saying, "I appeal to you on the basis of the Rapture that you should not fear that you are in the Day of the Lord. The Rapture must take place first. You will be taken home to heaven at that time and will thus escape the horrors of the Day of the Lord."

The expression **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him** seems to refer unmistakably to the Rapture. That is the time when we will be gathered to meet Him in the air.

2:2 It should be clear that the Rapture is not the same as the Day of the Lord. The Thessalonians were not worried that the Lord had come; they knew that He had not. But they *were* worried that the Day of the Lord had begun. The intense persecution they were enduring made them think they were in the Tribulation, the first phase of the Day of the Lord.

Rumors had been circulating that Paul himself had said that the Day of the Lord had arrived. Like most rumors, they were very garbled. One version intimated that Paul had received the information **by spirit**, that is, by a special revelation. According to another report, the news had come **by word**, that is, the apostle had publicly taught that the Tribulation had begun. **By letter**

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as if from us is generally understood to refer to a forged letter, purportedly from Paul, that the Day of the Lord had started. The expression **as if from us** probably goes with **spirit, word, and letter**. None of these sources was to be trusted.

According to the KJV and NKJV (following the majority of manuscripts), the saints were afraid that **the day of Christ had come**. **The day of Christ** and similar expressions usually point forward to the Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:15, 16).

But the Thessalonians were not in fear that the Day of Christ was at hand. That would have meant release from their sufferings. Most pre-tribulationists prefer the reading in the RV: "the day of the Lord is now present."⁶ Paul's readers were afraid that the Day of God's *wrath* had begun.

B. The Man of Sin (2:3–12)

2:3 Now the apostle explains why they could not be in **that Day**. Certain events must take place first. After the Rapture, these events will begin to happen.

First of all there will be **the falling away**, or the apostasy. What does this mean? We can only surmise that it refers to a wholesale abandonment of Christianity, a positive rejection of the Christian faith.

Then a great world figure will arise. As to his character, he is **the man of sin** or lawlessness, that is, the very embodiment of sin and rebellion. As to his destiny, he is **the son of perdition**; he is doomed to eternal judgment.

The Scriptures contain many descriptions of important personages who will arise during the Tribulation, and it is difficult to know when different names apply to the same person. Some commentators believe that the man of sin will be a Jewish Antichrist. Others teach that he will be the Gentile head of the revived Roman Empire. Here are the names of some of the great rulers of the end times:

- ... the man of sin and son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3)
- ... the Antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18)
- ... the little horn (Dan. 7:8, 24b–26)
- ... the king of fierce features (Dan. 8:23–25)
- ... the prince who is to come (Dan. 9:26)
- ... the willful king (Dan. 11:36)
- ... the worthless shepherd (Zech. 11:17)
- ... the beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1–10)
- ... the beast out of the earth (Rev. 13:11–17)
- ... the scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 17:4, 8–14)
- ... the king of the North (Dan. 11:6)
- ... the king of the South (Dan. 11:40)
- ... the false prophet (Rev. 19:20; 20:10)
- ... Gog, of the land of Magog (Ezek. 38:2–39:11) [not to be confused with the Gog of Rev. 20:8 who arises *after* the Millennium]

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... the one who comes in his own name (John 5:43)

The man of sin has been given an intriguing variety of identifications down through the years. He has been equated with the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, the Roman Empire, the final form of apostate Christendom, Judas reincarnated, Nero reincarnated, the Jewish State, Mohammed, Luther, Napoleon, Mussolini, and the embodiment of Satan.

2:4 He will violently oppose every form of divine worship and will enthrone himself **in the temple of God** in Jerusalem. This description clearly identifies him as Antichrist, the one who is *opposed to Christ* and who sets himself up *in the place of Christ*.

Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15 show that this blasphemous action of the Antichrist takes place in the middle of the Tribulation Period. Those who refuse to worship him will be persecuted and many will be martyred.

2:5 Paul used to tell the Thessalonians **these things** when he **was still with** them. However, with contradictory teaching being given to them which seemed to accurately describe the fierce persecutions they were then enduring, they had forgotten what the apostle had said. We all forget too easily and need to be constantly reminded of the great truths of the faith.

2:6 They knew **what** was **restraining** the full and open manifestation of the man of sin, and what would continue to restrain him until the appointed time.

This brings us to the third great unanswered question in this chapter. The first is, "What is the apostasy?" The second is, "Who is the man of sin?" The third is, "What or who is the restrainer?"

In the first part of verse 6, the restrainer is described in an impersonal way ... **what is restraining**. But then in verse 7 it is a person—He who now restrains. E. W. Rogers puts it clearly:

It is Something and Someone who wittingly, purposefully, and designedly holds it in check *with the view* to ensuring that the Man of Lawlessness is revealed in his own proper time.

Seven of the more common views as to the identity of the restrainer are: (1) the Roman Empire, (2) the Jewish State, (3) Satan, (4) the principle of law and order as found in human government, (5) God, (6) the Holy Spirit, and (7) the true church as indwelt by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit indwelling the church and the individual believer seems to fit the description of the restrainer more completely and accurately than any of the others. Just as the restrainer is spoken of as Something and Someone in this chapter, so the Spirit is spoken of in John 14:26, 15:26, 16:8, 13, 14 as both neuter (the Holy Spirit) and masculine (He). As early as Genesis 6:3, the Holy Spirit is spoken of in connection with the restraint of evil. Then later He is seen in this same role in Isaiah 59:19b, John 16:7–11, and 1 John 4:4.

It is by the indwelling Spirit that believers are the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) and the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Salt is a preservative, but it also hinders the spread of corruption. Light dispels darkness, the sphere in which men love to perform their evil deeds (John 3:19). When the Holy Spirit leaves the world as the permanent Indweller of the church (1 Cor. 3:16) and of individual believers (1 Cor. 6:19), the restraint of lawlessness will be gone.

2:7 Even when Paul wrote, **the mystery of lawlessness was already at work**. By this we understand that a tremendous spirit of disobedience to God was already stirring beneath the

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surface. It was at work in **mystery** form—not that it was mysterious but rather that it was not yet fully manifested. It was still in germ form.

What has hindered the full display of this spirit? We believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling the church and indwelling every believer has been the restraining power. He will continue to exercise this function **until He is taken out of the way**, that is, at the Rapture.

But here an objection is raised. How can the Holy Spirit be removed from the world? As one of the Persons of the Godhead, isn't He omnipresent, that is, everywhere at all times? How then can He leave the world?

Of course, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. He is always in all places at one and the same time. And yet there was a distinct sense in which He *came* to the earth on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had repeatedly promised that He and the Father would send the Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). How then did the Spirit come? He came as the permanent Indweller of the church and of every believer. Until Pentecost the Spirit had been *with* believers, but since Pentecost He has dwelt *in* them (John 14:17). Until Pentecost the Spirit was known to depart from believers—hence David's prayer, "Do not take your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11b). After Pentecost the Spirit remains forever in believers of the Church Age (John 14:16).

The Holy Spirit will, we believe, *leave* the world in the same sense in which He *came* at Pentecost—that is, as the abiding Indweller of the church and of each believer. He will still be in the world, convicting people of sin and leading them to saving faith in Christ. His removal at the Rapture does not mean that no one will be saved during the Tribulation. Of course they will. But these people will not be members of the church, but rather the subjects of Christ's glorious kingdom.

2:8 After the church has been Raptured to heaven, **the lawless one will be revealed** to the world. In this verse, the apostle skips over the career of the Antichrist and describes his ultimate doom. It almost sounds as if he will be destroyed as soon as he is revealed. But that of course is not so. He is allowed to conduct the reign of terror described in verses 9–12 before he is brought down at Christ's coming to reign.

If we are right in believing that the man of sin is revealed after the Rapture and that he continues until Christ's Revelation, then his mad career lasts approximately seven years—the length of the Tribulation Period.

The **Lord Jesus will consume him with the breath of His mouth** (cf. Isa. 11:4; Rev. 19:15), and will bring him to nothing by the manifestation **of His coming**. A word from Christ and the bright shining (Gk., *epiphaneia*) of His appearing (*parousia*) are all that are necessary to end the regime of this raging impostor.

The manifestation of Christ's coming, as has already been explained, is when He returns to the earth to take the throne and reign for one thousand years.

2:9 The coming of the lawless one is in accordance with the working of Satan. His career resembles that **of Satan** because he is energized by Satan. He will display all kinds of miracles and **signs and lying wonders**.

Here it is important to note that not all miracles are of God. The devil and his agents can perform miracles. The man of lawlessness will also perform them (Rev. 13:13–15).

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A miracle indicates *supernatural* power but not necessarily *divine* power. The miracles of our Lord proved Him to be the promised Messiah, not simply because they were supernatural, but because they fulfilled prophecy and were of such a moral nature that Satan could not have done them without harming his own cause.

2:10 The Antichrist will unscrupulously use every form of wickedness to deceive the perishing people—those who heard the gospel during the Age of Grace but who had no **love** for **the truth**. If they had believed, they would have been **saved**. But now they are deceived by the miracles of the Antichrist.

2:11 God actually will **send them** a working of error that **they should believe the lie**. The lie, of course, is the Antichrist's claim to be God. These people refused to receive the Lord Jesus as God manifest in the flesh. When He was on earth, He warned men, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me: if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43). So now they receive the man of sin who comes in his own name and demands worship as God. "Light rejected is light denied." If a person sets up an idol in his heart, God will answer him according to his idol (Ezek. 14:4).

The Antichrist will probably be Jewish (Ezek. 28:9, 10; Dan. 11:37, 38). Jews would not be deceived by one posing as the Messiah unless he claimed to be descended from the tribe of Judah and the family of David.

2:12 From this passage it seems that those who hear the gospel in this Age of Grace but who do not trust Christ will not have another opportunity to be saved after the Rapture. If men do not believe the Lord Jesus now, they will believe the Antichrist then. It says here that they **all** will be judged because of their unbelief and their love of evil. This is reminiscent of Luke 14:24, "For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."

We know that many people will be saved during the Tribulation Period. One hundred and forty-four thousand Jews, for instance, will be saved and will be God's messengers in preaching the gospel of the kingdom throughout the world. Through their ministry many others will be saved. But it seems that those who will be saved are those who never heard the gospel clearly presented during this present age and who never deliberately refused the Savior.⁴

Guard your hearts...flow living water.

Joel 2:13

So **rend your heart**, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

CEB: tear your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, very patient, full of faithful love, and ready to forgive.

⁴ MacDonald, W. (1995). [*Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*](#) (A. Farstad, Ed.; pp. 2052–2056). Thomas Nelson.

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Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 4:22-23

²² For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body.

²³ Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. HCSB

²⁴ Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly,
and don't let your lips talk deviously.

HAYFORD

Isaiah 3:1-15

GRIEVANCE/OBJECTION LIST FROM THE LORD

Now the Lord God of heavenly forces is removing from Jerusalem and from Judah every form of support:

all rations of food and water; ² soldier and warrior; judge and prophet; fortune-teller and elder;

³ commander and celebrity; counselor, clever craftsman, and cunning charmer.

⁴ I will make youths their commanders; **mischief makers** will rule over them.

⁵ The people will **oppress each other**, each one against the other, neighbor against neighbor.

The **young will bully the old**,
the **rogue**, and the **respectable**.

⁶ Someone will seize a family member, saying, "You have clothing! You be our leader!

This mess will be your responsibility!"

⁷ Someone else will cry out on that day,

"I'm no healer!

I have neither food nor clothing in my house!

Don't make me the leader of the people!"

⁸ Yes, Jerusalem has stumbled

and Judah has fallen,

because the way they talk and act in word and deed insults the Lord, defying his brilliant glory.

⁹ Their **bias in judgment** gives them away;

like Sodom, they **display their sins in public**.

Doom to them, for they have done themselves in!

¹⁰ Tell the righteous how blessed they are; they will eat the fruit of their labors.

¹¹ **Doom to the wicked; they are evil.**

What they have done will be done to them.

¹² As for my people—**oppressors strip them and swindlers rule them.**

My people—your **leaders mislead you and confuse your paths.**

¹³ The Lord arises to accuse; he stands to judge the peoples.

¹⁴ The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people:

You yourselves have **devoured the vineyard;**

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the **goods stolen from the poor** are in your houses.

¹⁵ How dare you **crush my people** [OPPRESION]
and **grind the faces of the poor**?
says the Lord God of heavenly forces. CEB

Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem

3 For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts,
Takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah
The stock and the store,
The whole supply of bread and the whole supply
of water;
² The mighty man and the man of war,
The judge and the prophet,
And the diviner and the elder;
³ The captain of fifty and the [h]onorable man,
The counselor and the skillful artisan,
And the expert enchanter.
⁴ "I will give children [h] to be their princes,
And [h] babes shall rule over them.
⁵ The people will be oppressed,
Every one by another and every one by his
neighbor;
The child will be insolent toward the [h] elder,
And the [h] base toward the honorable."
⁶ When a man takes hold of his brother
In the house of his father, *saying*,
"You have clothing;
You be our ruler,
And *let* these ruins *be* under your [h] power,"
⁷ In that day he will protest, *saying*,
"I cannot cure *your* ills,
For in my house *is* neither food nor clothing;
Do not make me a ruler of the people."
⁸ For Jerusalem stumbled,
And Judah is fallen,
Because their tongue and their doings
Are against the Lord,

To provoke the eyes of His glory.
⁹ The look on their countenance witnesses
against them,
And they declare their sin as Sodom;
They do not hide *it*.
Woe to their soul!
For they have brought evil upon themselves.
¹⁰ "Say to the righteous that *it shall be* well with
them,
For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
¹¹ Woe to the wicked! *It shall be* ill with him,
For the reward of his hands shall be [h] given him.
¹² *As for* My people, children *are* their
oppressors,
And women rule over them.
O My people! Those who lead you [h] *cause you* to
err,
And destroy the way of your paths."

Oppression and Luxury Condemned

¹³ The Lord stands up to [h] plead,
And stands to judge the people.
¹⁴ The Lord will enter into judgment
With the elders of His people
And His princes:
"For you have [h] eaten up the vineyard;
The plunder of the poor *is* in your houses.
¹⁵ What do you mean by crushing My people
And grinding the faces of the poor?"
Says the Lord God of hosts.

COMPLAINTS:

From **Isaiah 3:1–15**, list as many complaints as you can that the Lord made against the leaders who caused Judah to stumble in the darkness of disobedience.

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Try to picture the imaginary woman Isaiah described in 3:16, 18–23. What did flirty, faithless Judah look like as she partied in the dark? (Is. 3:16, 18–23)

Describe the calamity that awaited foolish, promiscuous Judah (Is. 3:17, 24–4:1)

FAITH ALIVE

Apply the imagery of Isaiah 2:16–4:1 to a sin you struggle with in your life. How is yielding to this temptation like being a silly floozy partying in the dark?

How could the consequences of walking in the dark of this sin bring judgment on your life?

A GOOD BRANCH IN A ROTTEN VINEYARD

ISAIAH SEES JUDAH AS THE LORD’S BRIDE [Bride of Christ?]

The Lord had entered a covenant with His people that could be likened to a marriage. Isaiah pictured Judah, the Lord’s bride, as a lovely vineyard. He saw her under a wedding canopy (Is. 4:6). He sang a love ballad about the Lord and His vineyard bride (5:1, 2). But the ballad ended on a note of discord. The bride wasn’t content with her Groom.

Isaiah 4:2 continues the theme of judgment present in verse 1 as marked by the phrase “in that day” introducing both verses. God’s judgment on His people ultimately is restorative. What blessings will follow the calamities awaiting flirty, faithless Judah? (Is. 4:2–6)

BIBLE EXTRA

The Branch of the Lord first appears in Isaiah 4:2 as a messianic figure of speech. What is revealed about the Messiah in each of these Branch passages?

- Isaiah 4:2
- Isaiah 11:1, 10
- Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:15, 16
- Zechariah 3:8–10
- Zechariah 6:12, 13

Isaiah 5:1–7 steps back from the future to the prophet’s day and elaborates the metaphor of Judah as a vineyard. Summarize the various portions of this metaphor.

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- Description of the vineyard (Is. 5:1, 2)
- Owner's intentions for the vineyard (Is. 5:3–6)
- Application to Judah (Is. 5:7)

FAITH ALIVE

Much of the rest of Isaiah 5 contains a list of woes that expands the idea of oppression and unrighteousness introduced in verse 7. Identify the sins condemned in these woes and describe how they express themselves in modern life? (The first sin is identified for you as an example)

- Isaiah 5:8–10—Greed
- Isaiah 5:11, 12—_____
- Isaiah 5:18, 19—_____
- Isaiah 5:20, 21—_____
- Isaiah 5:22, 23—_____

The last verses of Isaiah 5 describe the imminent judgment flirty, faithless Judah faced. Summarize the two ways Isaiah presented this punishment.

- Using the vineyard metaphor (Is. 5:24, 25)
- Describing the Assyrian army (Is. 5:26–30)⁵

HORTON:

d. Foolish Trust 2:22

²²Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?

Their trust in idols was really a trust in human ability. But human beings, no matter how powerful, are dependent on God for life and breath. They cannot stop God's judgment. Accordingly, the command is to stop depending on human beings and human resources, encouraging a trust in the Lord instead.

3. JUDAH'S EVIL JUDGED 3:1–4:1

⁵ Hayford, J. W., & Snider, J. (1996). [*Welcoming the Saving Reign of God: A study of Isaiah*](#). Thomas Nelson.

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In 3:1–15 Isaiah deals with God’s judgment on the people of Judah and their rulers. It will bring deportation, chaos, and disaster. Actually, the people bring ruin on themselves, and their sins testify against them. They are guilty, and God’s judgment is just.

[LIVING SUPERNATURALLY MINDED IN A NATURAL WORLD]

a. Judah and Jerusalem Judged 3:1–3

¹See now, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water, ²the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, ³the captain of fifty and man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter.

The double title, “the Lord, the LORD Almighty” (Heb. *ha’adon Yahweh ts^eva’oth*, “the Lord Yahweh of Armies,” probably meaning “of the armies of angels”) emphasizes the LORD’s authority. The Hebrew form of the verb “take” indicates a near and certain fulfillment.

[IMMINENT!]

God will remove all forms of support (indicated by the masculine and feminine forms of the same Heb. word). That support includes the necessities of food and water. A siege that will last until “all supplies of food and all supplies of water” are gone is implied.

[THE HAND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT PULLING BACK]

The people have been depending on the support of powerful heroes, mighty warriors. But God will take them away either by death or into captivity by the enemy. He will also take away the officers and enlisted men of the army; judges who decided legal disputes; prophets who were the advisors of the king (but who were disobedient to God and more concerned about public opinion); superstitious soothsayers who were supposed to communicate with the spirit world; wise elders who were advisers to the king; captains of fifty who were lesser officials; men of rank who were haughty, despotic, powerful, and wealthy; expert craftsmen or artisans who produced war materials; and clever enchanters who whispered formulas or magic charms. All these who were considered the backbone of the country will be taken away. Their support will be ineffective and they themselves will be lost.

Second Kings 24:14 tells how Nebuchadnezzar deported all the officers and fighting men as well as all the craftsmen and artisans. We can be sure Sennacherib also included them among the 200,150 captives he claims he deported in 701 B.C. in Isaiah’s day.

b. Resulting Chaos And Anarchy 3:4–7

⁴I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them.

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Because of the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the people as a whole, God would remove all those with leadership abilities (age, experience, or social status). The leadership, in effect, would be left to boys and children. This probably does not refer to actual children but to adults without experience and understanding, without a sense of responsibility, and without real authority for leadership. These individuals might be careless, capricious, or even ruthless. They might be hoodlums.

⁵People will oppress each other—man against man, neighbor against neighbor. The young will rise up against the old, the base against the honorable.

The deportation of the leaders and skilled workers will result in a breakdown of society—violence, chaos, and anarchy. People will try to take advantage of each other. Instead of neighborly helpfulness and mutual appreciation, there will be mutual opposition: “man against man, neighbor against neighbor.” Instead of respect for the age or the dignity of honorable people, the young will take advantage of the old, and contemptible people will refuse to honor anyone.

⁶A man will seize one of his brothers at his father’s home, and say, “You have a cloak, you be our leader; take charge of this heap of ruins!”

Some people will be sincerely concerned about the chaotic situation. They will make frantic but unsuccessful efforts to restore order in the midst of the chaos. Because they are hungry and poorly clothed, they will seize any man who has good clothes and seems to have some self-respect to try to make him a ruler over the ruined cities of Judah.

⁷But in that day he will cry out, “I have no remedy. I have no food or clothing in my house; do not make me the leader of the people.”

The man seized will immediately cry out that he has no ability or resources to bind up the wounds of the nation. He has “no food or clothing” in his house. In other words, what he is wearing is all he has. Ordinarily people seek positions of leadership as an honor. But in this pitiful situation, he will refuse to get involved. He knows any attempt at leadership will be fruitless.

c. Well-deserved Judgment 3:8–9

⁸Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.

The siege will end in defeat for Israel. Now Isaiah describes the causes of the coming disaster. He uses verb forms of completed action (the Heb. perfect tense), for he presents the future as certain, as sure as if it had already happened. “Jerusalem staggers” and nearly falls. Judah does fall. This actually took place during Sennacherib’s invasion in 701 B.C.

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Then Isaiah describes the cause of the disaster. It will not come by mere chance. By both “words and deeds” they have rebelled against the LORD. They have defied the “presence” (lit., “the eyes”) of the LORD’s glory. He sees their rebellion and is hurt by it.

⁹The 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.

These guilty Israelites deserve to hear the Hebrew term ‘oy, “Woe” or “Alas”—a term unique to the prophets and often used to introduce a judgment passage. Jesus also used this prophetic terminology (Matt. 23). The term sets the context for the entire passage. The people no longer have any shame; “they parade their sin.” The impudent look on their faces shows their attitude toward God. In fact, they flaunt their sin as the people of Sodom did, and all the people round about see their attitude as well as their degenerate state. Thus God pronounces a woe upon them. They are about to suffer the consequences of their sins, and the “disaster” they have brought “upon themselves” will damage them, not God.

d. The Choice Between Blessings And Disaster 3:10–11

¹⁰Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.

In the midst of these judgments, God assures “the righteous” (godly people whose conduct and character please Him) that it will be well with them. Here the term “well” is in the emphatic position in the Hebrew. They deserve and will enjoy blessings because of their righteous deeds.

¹¹Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done.

In contrast to the reward of the righteous, “disaster,” or ruin, will come to the wicked (especially to the corrupt leadership), who are guilty of injustice and wrongdoing. God loves His people, but there is a fundamental law of retribution that the New Testament also recognizes: “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Gal. 6:7–8).

e. A Sorrowful Lament 3:12

¹²Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path.

God’s heart is broken by our sin (as the Book of Hosea so clearly shows). In the midst of Israel’s situation that was leading to disaster, God still recognizes the people as His people. There is a sense of grief as He recognizes that young, inexperienced leaders oppress them like the taskmasters who were slave drivers. Women ruling may refer to women as the power behind the weak rulers. These weak rulers do not warn the people of danger and even encourage them in

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their rebellion against God and in their idolatry. The Hebrew for “they turn you from the path” can mean “they swallow up the paths of righteousness,” that is, they confuse the people about what is right, trying to make it impossible for the people to follow the paths of obedience to God.

f. The LORD Passes Judgement On Leaders 3:13–14

¹³The LORD takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people.

Again Isaiah pictures a court scene. The LORD comes in as the divine Judge. He arises with holy indignation to pass judgment after the people’s own sins have witnessed against them. “People” is plural in the Hebrew; however, the context indicates that it is God’s people who are in view, possibly the people of both northern Israel and Judah. Nevertheless, there can be an application to all the peoples of the world.

¹⁴The LORD enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: “It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

The primary condemnation is against the rulers and tribal leaders or elders who have oppressed and treated God’s people with injustice. Again and again Isaiah emphasizes the responsibilities of leadership. God expected leaders to act justly and teach righteousness. When they failed, they deserved special judgment.

The nation is God’s vineyard that He planted (cf. Isa. 5:7; Jer. 12:10; Hos. 10:1), but the leaders have not tended or guarded it. Instead, they have “ruined” it, enriching themselves. They have ruthlessly oppressed the poor (including those without social status or worldly distinction), disregarding their rights, “crushing” them, “grinding” their faces (in the dirt). God confronts them with their guilt.

g. Proud Women Of Zion Judged 3:16–24

¹⁶The LORD says, “The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles.

In a way somewhat parallel to the preceding section, the LORD now addresses the women. God is not overemphasizing the guilt of the women. Only half a chapter out of the sixty-six in this book deals expressly with them. The men showed by their conduct that they were the primary causes of the disaster, but they were not alone. Frivolous, luxury-loving women helped to bring it on (cf. Amos 4:1–3).

When the women of the nation are self-centered, the nation is headed toward destruction. The women contributed to the disaster by their arrogant spirit, haughty attitudes, lustful desires, and flirting gestures. They walked with unnaturally short steps because of ankle chains worn in a

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prescribed fashion, making the ornaments “on their ankles” jingle. Their whole demeanor and dress served only to draw attention to themselves.

¹⁷Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the LORD will make their scalps bald.”

Because of their pride, God will strike “the heads of the women” with scabby sores, like those of leprosy. Uncleanliness will cause disease, which in turn will cause the baldness that will bring their ostracism. Their shame will become obvious to all, and the ruin of the nation will humiliate the proud, wealthy women.

¹⁸In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, ¹⁹the earrings and bracelets and veils, ²⁰the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, ²¹the signet rings and nose rings, ²²the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses ²³and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls.

“That day” is a preliminary day of the LORD brought about by Assyrian invasions. The LORD’s judgment will be the real cause of the women losing all of their finery—literally from head to toe.

²⁴Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding.

Not only will the beauty and finery be taken away; instead of the fragrance of perfumes, there will be a rotten stench, probably from pus in open sores and ulcers. Instead of rich, ornamented sashes, they will have a rope around them, like the poorest slave. Instead of beauty, they will be disfigured by burning, branded as slaves. (The Dead Sea Scrolls read “shame” instead of “branding.”) It is a picture of women being taken into captivity by the conquering Assyrians in 701 B.C. Most of the people who heard Isaiah give these warnings lived to share in the judgment.

h. Judah’s Devastation 3:25–26

²⁵Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle.

Now the prophet addresses Judah. The men are victims of war. There are none left to defend the nation or protect the women. 4:1 shows how this affects the women.

²⁶The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground.

The gates of Jerusalem are depicted as being in mourning because the crowds that usually gathered there for public meetings and for business are all gone. To “sit on the ground” is an act of mourning the desolate, helpless situation caused by the devastation.

i. A Result Of Judgment 4:1

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¹In that day seven women will take hold of one man and say, “We will eat our own food and provide our own clothes; only let us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!”

As a result of the judgment prophesied in 3:25–26 so few men will be left after the Assyrian assault that most young women will be unprotected and unable to get a husband. As a result, “seven women” will beg “one man” to marry them. Though the law required a husband to provide food and clothing for his wife (Exod. 21:10–11), these women will provide their own—if only the man will let them “be called” by his name, that is, marry them and give them his protection. Hebrew women felt a deep disgrace if they were unmarried or childless.

4. THE BRANCH AND THE BRIDAL CANOPY 4:2–6

In Isaiah, judgment is not the end of God’s plan. The rest of this chapter jumps ahead to the new, restored Zion, a Zion purified by suffering. This renewed Zion will be made prosperous and holy, with the LORD dwelling among His people and protecting them. He is a gracious and faithful God.

a. A Day Of Peace And Restoration 4:2–4

²In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

The “Branch” (Heb. *tsemach*, “Shoot,” “Sprout”) of the LORD is a term that later prophets used to refer to the Messiah (Jer. 23:5–6; 33:15–16; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Scholars have differing opinions here. Some contend it is a collective term for everything the LORD makes grow in marvelous fertility. Others apply it to the restored, spiritually regenerated nation of Israel or the purified remnant. Still others say it is the Messiah and that He will be a fruit-bearing Branch. Certainly nothing here excludes its being applied to the Messiah. It cannot apply to the remnant, however, for they are the survivors who are distinguished from the Branch here. The Branch will bear fruit that the survivors will enjoy. The fruit will be their “pride and glory.”

³Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

The remnant will be holy. The remnant referred to here are not the ones left behind after Sennacherib’s invasion or after the later Babylonian destruction, but those who are left after the future Day of Judgment. These will be recorded as true citizens of the holy Jerusalem. (See 2:2–3.)

⁴The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.

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The Lord (Heb. *'adonai*) will purge the “women of Zion” from the filth of their sin. “He will cleanse the bloodstains” caused by violence and crimes. A blast of God’s righteous judgment will fan the flames of His cleansing fire. God’s judgment will restore purity and His Spirit will bring sanctification. Jerusalem will once again be a place where the people will enjoy fellowship with God.

b. A Bridal Canopy 4:5–6

⁵Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy.

During the Exodus from Egypt, God manifested His glory and presence in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The godly remnant is promised a restoration to that original closeness of God’s presence. However, there is a difference.

During the Exodus, the cloud rested only over the ark. Now the glory is over the whole of Zion and its people, who assemble for worship there. The whole city is a sanctuary, newly created by God. Over it all, God’s glory rests like the canopy over a king’s throne. “Canopy” might also be compared to that of a marriage ceremony, with God and His people rejoined in love. (See Ps. 19:5; Joel 2:16, translated “chamber” instead of “canopy.”) This is God’s unconditional promise.

⁶It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.

The canopy of glory “will be a shelter and shade from the heat” of a hot, midsummer day. It will be “a refuge and hiding place” from the storm elements, human enemies, the powers of evil, and all the vicissitudes of life. We can have a foretaste of this now through Jesus, our Immanuel (“God with us”), who gives us the Holy Spirit to be with us always.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What did Isaiah expect the conversion of Gentiles to encourage Israel to do?
2. What judgment must those who engage in false worship expect?
3. How does the Day of the LORD fit in with the Bible’s linear view of history?
4. What will the judgments of the Day of the LORD cause idol worshipers to do?
5. What were the people depending on in Isaiah’s day?
6. What would be the result of the deportation of leaders and skilled workers?
7. In what ways does this chapter contrast the reward of the righteous with the judgment of the wicked?
8. Why would God’s judgment come on the women?
9. Why would seven women beg one man to marry them?
10. Who is the Branch of the LORD?

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11. What does God promise the holy remnant in Jerusalem?

C. The Vineyard And Its Fruit 5:1–30

1. THE SONG OF THE VINEYARD 5:1–7

a. *A Love Song 5:1–2*

¹I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

Why does God bring judgment on His chosen people? Isaiah answers by giving us “the song of the vineyard” and its lessons. The song (vv. 1–7) is a parable (or allegory) in which the prophet acts as a singer who sings about “the one” he loves and his loved one’s vineyard. The use of the vineyard as a symbol would have gotten the attention of the people of Israel, for fertile vineyards were a joy to them. Eventually the singer gives voice to his loved one, who tells of his disappointment in his vineyard (cf. Matt. 21:33–44). After the song, the prophet explains the symbols and applies them to the relationship between the Lord and His people.

The Hebrew literally says the vineyard is planted in “a horn of a son of oil,” that is, on a hillside that has rich soil, a favorable situation, and a sunny aspect. Israelites considered such vineyards very valuable.

²He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

The loved one did everything possible to insure an excellent crop. Limestone is prevalent in Israel, and the soil is full of stones, so turning over the soil also calls for clearing away stones. He planted “the choicest vines,”² a superior variety that normally produces luscious, sweet red grapes. A strong stone tower was built for a watchman to guard the vineyard and to provide “a shady, cool place to rest.” A winepress was ready—two troughs hewed out of the bedrock. The larger, upper one was for trampling the grapes, the lower one was for receiving the juice. The owner of the vineyard did all this preparation with loving devotion and had great expectations. But instead of the good grapes he had a right to expect, the vines bore “only bad fruit” (small putrid grapes). Isaiah’s agrarian hearers must have felt the owner’s disappointment.

b. *Judgment For Putrid Grapes 5:3–6*

³Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

Now the loved one, the owner of the vineyard, calls on the people of Judah and Jerusalem to decide what should be done with his vineyard.

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⁴What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

Without waiting for an answer, the owner of the vineyard asks further rhetorical questions which make it obvious that nothing more could have been done. The owner of the vineyard could not be blamed in any way. His loving preparation and care was complete and unconditional. The implication is that the fault must be in the vineyard itself. Just as no one could accuse Jesus of sin (John 8:46), so no one could accuse the loved one who planted and cared for the vineyard.

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

The owner now pronounces judgment on the vineyard. There is nothing left to do but to destroy it since it failed to produce the good harvest it should have. The owner declares he “will take away its hedge” and “break down its wall,” thus removing protection and allowing intruders to come in and trample it down. Isaiah’s hearers would have to admit that the owner’s decision is only just.

⁶I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.”

The owner “will make it a wasteland,” no longer pruned, cultivated, or cared for in any way. “Briers and thorns” will choke out the vines and make it an unpleasant place.

That the owner “will command the clouds not to rain on it” makes clear the meaning of the parable. Only God can do that. He is the loved one who planted the vineyard.

c. The Vineyard Explained 5:7

⁷The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Now Isaiah explains the parable. The loved one is the Almighty LORD himself. The people of Judah and Jerusalem are His choice vines. He looked for the fruit of justice and righteousness but instead found the putrid fruit of injustice (the law violated by the judges) and a wailing cry for help from the oppressed. The wordplay in the Hebrew is striking: He looked for *mishpat* (justice) and saw *mispach* (lawbreaking); for *tsedaqah* (righteousness) and saw *tse’aqah* (a cry for help).

2. SIX WOES 5:8–25

⁸Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.

The judgment of verse 2 is shown to be just by the following list of six woes on six forms of rotten, stinking “fruit.” The first woe is against land-grabbers who enrich themselves by

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disregarding the sacred right of land inheritance (cf. Lev. 25:13–34; Mic. 2:2). There is no room left for people of ordinary means to own a house and land. The rich have reduced them to hired servants or sharecroppers. The rich minority own the whole land, God’s land—given as an inheritance to all of His people. These land-grabbers made property ownership their god.

⁹The LORD Almighty has declared in my hearing: “Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants.

The LORD has heard the cry of the poor, dispossessed people and gives a sure word to Isaiah: The mansions of the rich will become “desolate” and empty, for the rich will be forced to leave them because of their sins (cf. Amos 3:15).

¹⁰A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine, a homer of seed only an ephah of grain.”

Just how bad the desolation will be is seen in this verse. “A ten-acre vineyard” is literally a great field that takes ten yoke of oxen to plow in a day. But it will produce “only a bath” (about five and one-half U.S. gallons, or twenty-four liters) of wine (rather, grape juice).

Sowing 220 liters of seed will produce a crop of less than 22 liters of grain. In other words, their crop would amount to only a meager 10 percent of what they sowed. The land-grabbers will end up devastated and hungry. God will judge their greed.

¹¹Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.

A love of pleasure that involves intemperance and drunken reveling brings the second woe. That they have become alcoholics is shown by their need for “drinks” (Heb. *shekhar*, probably beer) in the early morning. They continue partying and reveling through the day and into the night until they are “inflamed”—totally drunk—with wine.

¹²They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands.

They live for the music and wine of their banquets and parties. Thus, they have “no regard” or time for the LORD, His deeds, or His work. They are blind to His acts, His sovereignty, and to the course of events that will bring His work of judgment. They have made pleasure and entertainment their gods.

¹³Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men of rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst.

Because their leaders have not instructed them in God’s law and have not warned them against breaking it, the people lack understanding and “will go into exile.” The judgment will fall on both the rulers and the masses of the common people. In contrast to the feasting and partying, the wealthy rulers “will die of hunger” and the common people will die of thirst. As Isaiah 10:5–6 prophesies, God would soon use Assyria to bring this judgment.

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¹⁴Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers.

She'ol, the abode of the wicked dead, which corresponds to the Greek *Hadēs* and the English “hell,” is pictured as an insatiable monster ready to swallow up the people who are guilty of sins against God. They spent their time feasting; now Sheol waits to feast on them. The masses who followed their false leaders will descend with them into Sheol, along “with all their brawlers and revelers.”

¹⁵So man will be brought low and mankind humbled, the eyes of the arrogant humbled.

So all classes of people will be “brought low ... humbled” (cf. 2:9, 17). “The eyes of the arrogant” oppressors—the covetous, unscrupulous people—are singled out for humiliation.

¹⁶But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.

The wealthy and the rulers violated the principles of justice and righteousness. But God “will be exalted by his justice” that He upholds when He judges the guilty. He is holy and “will show himself holy” by demonstrating His righteousness. Isaiah later shows that God’s righteousness will restore people through His divine grace.

¹⁷Then sheep will graze as in their own pasture; lambs will feed among the ruins of the rich.

Those great estates and rich fields seized by the rich will become pasture lands. No one will be there to cultivate them. Lambs (or goats) will roam over the ruins of what the rich once enjoyed.

¹⁸Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and wickedness as with cart ropes,

Obstinate sinners whose open unbelief defies the LORD bring the third woe. Their loads of sin and wickedness are so heavy that the deceitful cords they use to draw their load are too small, so they have to use “cart ropes.”

It is also clear that they are bound to their sin and guilt. The cords that bound them at first have now become unbreakable ropes. Sin enslaves those who yield to it.

¹⁹to those who say, “Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it.”

They mockingly refer to Isaiah’s warnings of the coming day of God’s judgment. In a sense, they dare God to make good His warnings of future punishment. They are indifferent to Isaiah’s prophecies, thinking that because nothing has happened yet, nothing ever will. They do not understand God’s timing (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9–10). They despise God because they do not know Him.

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²⁰Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Reversing moral distinctions brings the fourth woe. The people and their teachers have become so depraved they consider sin to be normal, and good to be evil. The whole attitude of most of the people had become like confusing bitter and sweet or light and darkness. “Bitter” and “sweet” may be compared to personal morality; “light” and “darkness” to public morality. Theirs is like the attitude of the world today with respect to alcohol, abortion, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions. How sad when people twist the truth! How sad when they laugh at sins that Christ died for. The pursuit of the pleasures of sin can only bring suffering and anguish.

²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

Conceited people, probably rulers and politicians, receive the fifth woe. They put self and their own wisdom on the throne and imagine they know better than God and His prophet. Isaiah often found himself in conflict with the political advisers of Judah’s kings (see 28:9–15; 30:1, 10–14). Self-sufficient people who depend on the reasonings of their own finite minds, reject God’s will, and selfishly pursue a secular lifestyle are still headed for divine judgment.

²²Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks,

Drunken, corrupt judges deserve the sixth woe. Leaders who should be heroes on the battlefield could boast only of how much wine they could hold and how they excelled at “mixing drinks” (wine with spices, aromatic herbs, and probably drugs) in order to get a greater high. Such indulgence is exalted by them.

²³who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.

To support their drugs and drinking, bribery has become a way of life to the judges. Their indulgence in these things makes them insensitive to anything but their own desires. So the innocent poor, who are not able to give them a bribe, cannot get justice from them. With these judges and leaders, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10).

²⁴Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel.

As a conclusion to the list of woes, God speaks of the release of His wrath. The suddenness of the judgment is compared to straw and dry grass quickly disappearing in flames. The decay of the root and the blowing away of the flowers illustrate the completeness of the ruin. The rejection of the law and instruction of the LORD includes the spurning of His word and their rejection of the prophecies of Isaiah.

²⁵Therefore the LORD’s anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.

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As a climax to the six woes, Isaiah now draws a lesson from the past, probably from the great earthquake in the time of Uzziah (Amos 1:1). This was a major disaster, remembered even in the time of Zechariah (Zech. 14:5). It killed so many in such a few minutes that bodies lay in the streets for some time.

Despite the size of that disaster, it was nothing compared to the results of their continued sin. God's anger was not appeased. His hand in Isaiah's day was "still upraised" against Judah for further disaster—that is, to bring the Assyrian invasion described in the following verses.

3. NATIONS UNDER GOD'S CONTROL BRING JUDGMENT 5:26–30

²⁶He lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily!

God is about to execute His judgment. The "banner," or flag, the LORD lifts high is a signal for warriors of a distant nation to attack. God has appointed them as agents of His wrath. He will whistle to summon them and they will come swiftly. Assyria and her allies are these foreign warriors. They come from a land that to the Israelites was "at the ends of the earth."

²⁷Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is loosened at the waist, not a sandal thong is broken.

The reason the enemy will come so speedily is that they are well-prepared. The warriors are fit, alert, and ready to march. The long march will not wear them out and they will be ready for battle, not sleep, when they reach their objective. Their loose outer garments are belted in preparation for fighting. Their sandals are new—not even a broken sandal strap will impede them. What a contrast to the unprepared, careless, carousing disposition of Judah and its leaders!

²⁸Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung; their horses' hoofs seem like flint, their chariot wheels like a whirlwind.

The enemy's equipment is in top shape: arrows sharpened, bows strung (Heb. *d^erukhoth*, "bent") for battle, horses' hooves hard and sound (metal horseshoes were not used in ancient times), multitudes of chariot wheels whirring—making a sound like that of a hurricane or tornado.

²⁹Their roar is like that of the lion, they roar like young lions; they growl as they seize their prey and carry it off with no one to rescue.

The approaching Assyrian armies will be irresistible. The uproar and battle cries of their approach will be like the roaring of a lion. Also, like a lion, they will pounce on their prey and "carry it off." Because of the numbers and equipment of the enemy, Judah will not be able to resist. Once the enemy comes, any human aid they trust in will be nowhere to be found. Hezekiah did look to Egypt for help and hired mercenary soldiers to help defend Judah, but Egypt was

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defeated and the hired soldiers all fled. The Assyrians then carried off many of the people of Judah into captivity.

³⁰In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds.

Now, as God is using the Assyrians, another roar, “like the roaring of the sea,” will be heard over the land—like a great, unstoppable tidal wave. This time the people of Judah will experience the chaos of being in this hopeless situation. The figures of clouds and darkness show their distress. They will be like a ship in a storm that has lost its bearings and looks for some sign of land or a ray of light and sees none. We must remember, however, that God’s purpose for Israel was still redemptive.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In what ways was Israel like a vineyard?
2. How do the six woes describe and judge Israel’s putrid fruit?
3. What kind of army will God summon to bring judgment on His people?

II. THE HOLY ONE EXALTED 6:1–12:6

A. Isaiah Called To A Difficult Ministry 6:1–13

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MESSIAH (Mēs sī’ ah) Transliteration of Hebrew word meaning “anointed one” that was translated into Greek as *Christos*. “Christ” or Messiah is therefore a name admirably suited to express both the church’s link with Israel through the OT and the faith that sees in Jesus Christ the worldwide scope of the salvation in Him.

The Old Testament and Early Jewish Background “Anointed” carries several senses in the OT. All have to do with installing a person in an office in a way that the person will be regarded as accredited by Yahweh, Israel’s God. Even a pagan king such as Cyrus was qualified as the Lord’s anointed (Isa. 45:1) to execute a divinely appointed task. The usual application of the term “anointed” was to God’s representatives within the covenant people. Prophets such as Elisha

⁶ Horton, S. M. (2000). [*Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary*](#) (pp. 405–490). Logion Press.

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were set apart in this way (1 Kings 19:16). Israel probably saw a close link between the anointed persons and God's spirit though the link is specifically mentioned only occasionally (2 Kings 2:9). Israelite kings were particularly hailed as Yahweh's anointed (cp. Judg. 9:8), beginning with Saul (1 Sam. 9–10 NIV) and especially referring to David (1 Sam. 16:6, 13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3) and Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). The royal family of David as being the line of Israelite kings are mentioned by the title of the "anointed ones" (2 Sam. 22:51; cp. 2 Kings 11:12; 23:30; Pss. 2:2; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9). The king in Israel thus became a sacred person to whom loyalty and respect were to be accorded (1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam. 1:14, 16). The oracle spoken by Nathan (2 Sam. 7:12–16) is important since it centers the hope of Israel on the dynasty of David for succeeding generations.

The king, especially in the Psalms, became idealized as a divine son (Ps. 2:2, 7; cp. 2 Sam. 7:14) and enjoyed God's protecting favor (Pss. 18:50; 20:6; 28:8). His dynasty would not fail (Ps. 132:17), and the people were encouraged to pray to God on his behalf (Pss. 72:11–15; 84:9). The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. led to great confusion especially when Yahweh's anointed was taken into exile as a prisoner (Lam. 4:20) and his authority as king rejected by the nations (Ps. 89:38, 51). This humiliation of the Davidic dynasty posed a set of problems to Israel's faith, even when the people were permitted to return to the land. No revival came for the Davidic kingship, yet that restoration became the pious longing of the Jews both in Babylonian exile (Jer. 33:14–18) and in the later centuries. One of the clearest expressions of the continuing hope was in the *Psalms of Solomon* (17–18) (70–40 B.C.), a Jewish writing of the Messiah as the son of David. There Messiah was a warrior-prince who would expel the hated Romans from Israel and bring in a kingdom in which the Jews would be promoted to world dominion.

After the exile the Israelite priesthood came into prominence. In the absence of a king, the high priest took on a central role in the community. The rite of anointing was the outward sign of his authority to function as God's representative. This authority was traced back to Aaron and his sons (Exod. 29:7–9; 30:22–33; cp. Ps. 133:2). The high priest was the anointed-priest (Lev. 4:3, 5, 16) and even, in one place, a "messiah" (Zech. 4:14; cp. 6:13; Dan. 9:25).

In the exilic and postexilic ages, the expectation of a coming Messiah came into sharper focus, commencing with Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's vision of a Messiah who would combine the traits of royalty and priestly dignity (Jer. 33:14–18; Ezek. 46:1–8; Zech. 4:1–14; 6:13).

Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament

PROPHECY	O.T. REFERENCES	N.T. FULFILLMENT
Seed of the woman	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14
Through Noah's sons	Gen. 9:27	Luke 6:36
Seed of Abraham	Gen. 12:3	Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:8, 16

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Seed of Isaac	Gen. 17:19	Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18
Blessing to nations	Gen. 18:18	Gal. 3:8
Seed of Isaac	Gen. 21:12	Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18
Blessing to Gentiles	Gen. 22:18	Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 6:14
Blessing to Gentiles	Gen. 26:4	Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 6:14
Blessing through Abraham	Gen. 28:14	Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 6:14
Of the tribe of Judah	Gen. 49:10	Rev. 5:5
No bone broken	Ex. 12:46	John 19:36
Blessing to firstborn son	Ex. 13:2	Luke 2:23
No bone broken	Num. 9:12	John 19:36
Serpent in wilderness	Num. 21:8–9	John 3:14–15
A star out of Jacob	Num. 24:17–19	Matt. 2:2; Luke 1:33, 78; Rev. 22:16
As a prophet	Deut. 18:15, 18–19	John 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22–23
Cursed on the tree	Deut. 21:23	Gal. 3:13
The throne of David established forever	2 Sam. 7:12–13, 16, 25–26 1 Chron. 17:11–14, 23–27 2 Chron. 21:7	Matt. 19:28; 21:4; 25:31; Mark 12:37; Luke 1:32; John 7:4; Acts 2:30; 13:23 Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8 Heb. 1:5, 8; 8:1; 12:2; Rev. 22:1
A promised Redeemer	Job 19:25–27	John 5:28–29; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:7, 11, 14
Declared to be the Son of God	Ps. 2:1–12	Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Acts 4:25–26; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Rev. 2:26–27; 19:15–16

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His resurrection	Ps. 16:8–10	Acts 2:27; 13:35; 26:23
Hands and feet pierced	Ps. 22:1–31	Matt. 27:31, 35–36
Mocked and insulted	Ps. 22:7–8	Matt. 27:39–43, 45–49
Soldiers cast lots for coat	Ps. 22:18	Mark 15:20, 24–25, 34; Luke 19:24; 23:35; John 19:15–18, 23–24, 34; Acts 2:23–24
Accused by false witnesses	Ps. 27:12	Matt. 26:60–61
He commits his spirit	Ps. 31:5	Luke 23:46
No bone broken	Ps. 34:20	John 19:36
Accused by false witnesses	Ps. 35:11	Matt. 26:59–61; Mark 14:57–58
Hated without reason	Ps. 35:19	John 15:24–25
Friends stand afar off	Ps. 38:11	Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49
“I come to do Thy will”	Ps. 40:6–8	Heb. 10:5–9
Betrayed by a friend	Ps. 41:9	Matt. 26:14–16, 47, 50; Mark 14:17–21; Luke 22:19–23; John 13:18–19
Known for righteousness	Ps. 45:2, 6–7	Heb. 1:8–9
His resurrection	Ps. 49:15	Mark 16:6
Betrayed by a friend	Ps. 55:12–14	John 13:18
His ascension	Ps. 68:18	Eph. 4:8
Hated without reason	Ps. 69:4	John 15:25
Stung by reproaches	Ps. 69:9	John 2:17; Rom. 15:3
Given gall and vinegar	Ps. 69:21	Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:29

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Exalted by God	Ps. 72:1–19	Matt. 2:2; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1–8
He speaks in parables	Ps. 78:2	Matt. 13:34–25:34
Seed of David exalted	Ps. 89:3–4, 19, 27–29, 35–37	Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30; 13:23; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8
Son of Man comes in glory	Ps. 102:16	Luke 21:24, 27; Rev. 12:5–10
“Thou remainest”	Ps. 102:24–27	Heb. 1:10–12
Prays for his enemies	Ps. 109:4	Luke 23:34
Another to succeed Judas	Ps. 109:7–8	Acts 1:16–20
A priest like Melchizedek	Ps. 110:1–7	Matt. 22:41–45; 26:64; Mark 12:35–37; 16:19; Acts 7:56; Eph. 1:20; Col. 1:20; Heb. 1:13; 2:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:21; 8:1; 10:11–13; 12:2
The chief corner stone	Ps. 118:22–23	Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17; John 1:11; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4
The King comes in the name of the Lord	Ps. 118:26	Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13
David’s seed to reign	Ps. 132:11 cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–13, 16, 25–26, 29	Matt. 1:1
Declared to be the Son of God	Prov. 30:4	Matt. 3:17; Mark 14:61–62; Luke 1:35; John 3:13; 9:35–38; 11:21; Rom. 1:2–4; 10:6–9; 2 Pet. 1:17
Repentance for the nations	Isa. 2:2–4	Luke 24:47
Hearts are hardened	Isa. 6:9–10	Matt. 13:14, 15; John 12:39, 40; Acts 28:25–27

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Born of a virgin	Isa. 7:14	Matt. 1:22, 23
A rock of offense	Isa. 8:14, 15	Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8
Light out of darkness	Isa. 9:1, 2	Matt. 4:14–16; Luke 2:32
God with us	Isa. 9:6, 7	Matt. 1:21, 23; Luke 1:32, 33; John 8:58; 10:30; 14:19; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:9
Full of wisdom and power	Isa. 11:1–10	Matt. 3:16; John 3:34; Rom. 15:12; Heb. 1:9
Reigning in mercy	Isa. 16:4–5	Luke 1:31–33
Peg in a sure place	Isa. 22:21–25	Rev. 3:7
Death swallowed up in victory	Isa. 25:6–12	1 Cor. 15:54
A stone in Zion	Isa. 28:16	Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6
The deaf hear, the blind see	Isa. 29:18–19	Matt. 5:3; 11:5; John 9:39
King of kings, Lord of lords	Isa. 32:1–4	Rev. 19:16; 20:6
Son of the Highest	Isa. 33:22	Luke 1:32; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15
Healing for the needy	Isa. 35:4–10	Matt. 9:30; 11:5; 12:22; 20:34; 21:14; Mark 7:30; John 5:9
Make ready the way of the Lord	Isa. 40:3–5	Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–5; John 1:23
The Shepherd dies for his sheep	Isa. 40:10–11	John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:24–25
The meek Servant	Isa. 42:1–16	Matt. 12:17–21; Luke 2:32
A light to the Gentiles	Isa. 49:6–12	Acts 13:47; 2 Cor. 6:2

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Scourged and spat upon	Isa. 50:6	Matt. 26:67; 27:26, 30; Mark 14:65; 15:15, 19; Luke 22:63–65; John 19:1
Rejected by his people	Isa. 52:13–53:12	Matt. 8:17; 27:1–2, 12–14, 38
Suffered vicariously	Isa. 53:4–5	Mark 15:3–4, 27–28; Luke 23:1–25, 32–34
Silent when accused	Isa. 53:7	John 1:29; 11:49–52
Crucified with transgressors	Isa. 53:12	John 12:37–38; Acts 8:28–35
Buried with the rich	Isa. 53:9	Acts 10:43; 13:38–39; 1 Cor. 15:3; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:21–25; 1 John 1:7, 9
Calling of those not a people	Isa. 55:4, 5	John 18:37; Rom. 9:25–26; Rev. 1:5
Deliver out of Zion	Isa. 59:16–20	Rom. 11:26–2
Nations walk in the light	Isa. 60:1–3	Luke 2:32
Anointed to preach liberty	Isa. 60:1–2	Luke 4:17–19; Acts 10:38
Called by a new name	Isa. 62:11	Luke 2:32; Rev. 3:12
The King cometh	Isa. 62:11	Matt. 21:5
A vesture dipped in blood	Isa. 63:1–3	Rev. 19:13
Afflicted with the afflicted.	Isa. 63:8–9	Matt. 25:34–40
The elect shall inherit	Isa. 65:9	Rom. 11:5, 7; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5
New heavens and a new earth	Isa. 65:17–25	2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1
The Lord our righteousness	Jer. 23:5, 6	John 2:19–21; Rom. 1:3–4; Eph. 2:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5
Born a King	Jer. 30:9	John 18:37; Rev. 1:5

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Massacre of infants	Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:17–18
Conceived by the Holy Spirit	Jer. 31:22	Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35
A New Covenant	Jer. 31:31–34	Matt. 26:27–29; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:8–12; 10:15–17; 12:24; 13:20
A spiritual house	Jer. 33:15–17	John 2:19–21; Eph. 2:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5
A tree planted by God	Ezek. 17:22–24	Matt. 13:31–32
The humble exalted	Ezek. 21:26–27	Luke 1:52
The good Shepherd	Ezek. 34:23–24	John 10:11
Stone cut without hands	Dan. 2:34–35	Acts 4:10–12
His kingdom triumphant	Dan. 2:44–45	Luke 1:33; 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 11:15
An everlasting dominion	Dan. 7:13–14	Matt. 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 14:61, 62; Acts 1:9–11; Rev. 1:7
Kingdom for the saints	Dan. 7:27	Luke 1:33; 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 11:15
Time of His birth	Dan. 9:24–27	Matt. 24:15–21; Luke 3:1
Israel restored	Hos. 3:5	John 18:37; Rom. 11:25–27
Flight into Egypt	Hos. 11:1	Matt. 2:15
Promise of the Spirit	Joel 2:28–32	Acts 2:17–21; Rom. 15:13
The sun darkened	Amos 8:9	Matt. 24:29; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:12
Restoration of tabernacle	Amos 9:11–12	Acts 15:16–18

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Israel regathered	Mic. 2:12–13	John 10:14, 26
The Kingdom established	Mic. 4:1–8	Luke 1:33
Born in Bethlehem	Mic. 5:1–5	Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4, 10–11
Earth filled with knowledge of the glory of the Lord	Hab. 2:14	Rom. 11:26; Rev. 21:23–26
The Lamb on the throne	Zech. 2:10–13	Rev. 5:13; 6:9; 21:24; 22:1–5
A holy priesthood	Zech. 3:8	John 2:19–21; Eph. 2:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5
A heavenly High Priest	Zech. 6:12–13	Heb. 4:4; 8:1–2
Triumphal entry	Zech. 9:9–10	Matt. 21:4–5; Mark 11:9–10; Luke 20:38; John 12:13–15
Sold for pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12–13	Matt. 26:14–15
Money buys potter’s field	Zech. 11:12–13	Matt. 27:9
Piercing of his body	Zech. 12:10	John 19:34, 37
Shepherd smitten—sheep scattered	Zech. 13:1, 6–7	Matt. 26:31; John 16:32
Preceded by Forerunner	Mal. 3:1	Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27
Our sins purged	Mal. 3:3	Heb. 1:3
The light of the world	Mal. 4:2–3	Luke 1:78; John 1:9; 12:46; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28; 19:11–16; 22:16
The coming of Elijah	Mal. 4:5–6	Matt. 11:14; 17:10–12

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The people in the Dead Sea scrolls were evidently able to combine a dual hope of two Messiahs, one priestly and the second a royal figure. The alternation between a kingly Messiah and a priestly figure is characteristic of the two centuries of early Judaism prior to the coming of Jesus. **Messiahship in Jesus' Ministry** A question posed in John 4:29 (cp. 40–43) is: “Could this be the Messiah?” (HCSB). It is evident that the issue of the Messiah’s identity and role was one much debated among the Jews in the first century. In the Synoptic Gospels the way Jesus acted and spoke led naturally to the dialogue at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” a question to which Peter gave the reply, “You are the Messiah” (Mark 8:29 HCSB). Mark made clear that Jesus took an attitude of distinct reserve and caution to this title since it carried overtones of political power, especially in one strand of Jewish hope represented by the *Psalms of Solomon*. Jesus, therefore, accepted Peter’s confession with great reluctance since with it went the disciple’s objection that the Messiah could not suffer (Mark 9:32). For Peter, Messiah was a title of a glorious personage both nationalistic and victorious in battle. Jesus, on the other hand, saw His destiny in terms of a suffering Son of man and Servant of God (Mark 8:31–38; 9:31; 10:33–34). Hence He did not permit the demons to greet Him as Messiah (Luke 4:41) and downplayed all claims to privilege and overt majesty linked with the Jewish title.

The course of Jesus’ ministry is one in which He sought to wean the disciples away from the traditional notion of a warrior Messiah. Instead, Jesus tried to instill in their minds the prospect that the road to His future glory was bound to run by way of the cross, with its experience of rejection, suffering, and humiliation. At the trial before His Jewish judges (Matt. 26:63–66), He once more reinterpreted the title Messiah (KJV, Christ) and gave it a content in terms of the Son of Man figure, based on Dan. 7:13–14. This confession secured His condemnation, and He went to the cross as a crucified Messiah because the Jewish leaders failed to perceive the nature of messiahship as Jesus understood it. Pilate sentenced Him as a messianic pretender who claimed (according to the false charges brought against Him) to be a rival to Caesar (Mark 15:9; Luke 23:2; John 19:14–15). It was only after the resurrection that the disciples were in a position to see how Jesus was truly a king Messiah and how Jesus then opened their minds to what true messiahship meant (Luke 24:45–46). The national title “Messiah” then took on a broader connotation, involving a kingly role that was to embrace all peoples (Luke 24:46–47).

Messiah as a Title in the Early Church From the resurrection onward the first preachers announced that Jesus was the Messiah by divine appointment (Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:3–4). Part of the reason for this forthright declaration is to be traced to apologetic reasons. In the mission to Israel, the church had to show how Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies and came into the world as the “Son of David,” a title closely linked with the Messiah as a royal person. Matthew’s Gospel is especially concerned to establish the identity (Matt. 1:1), but it is equally a theme common to Luke (Luke 1:32, 69; 2:4, 11; Acts 2:29–36; 13:22–23). Paul also saw in Jesus the fulfillment of the messianic hopes of the old covenant (1 Cor. 5:7–8). Peter, too, sought to show how the sufferings of the Messiah were foretold (1 Pet. 1:11, 20; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). Luke stressed the link between Jesus as the One anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16–22) in a way that looks back to Isa. 61:1, and he recorded Peter’s statement (Acts 10:38 HCSB) that “God anointed Jesus of

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Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” as a fulfillment of OT prophecy. The letter to the Hebrews is rich in this theme (Heb. 1:9; 2:2–4; 9:14–15).

The final stage of development in regard to the title “Messiah” came in the way that Paul used the word more as a personal name than as an official designation (Rom. 9:5, “Christ”). The reason for this shift lies in the intensely personal nature of Paul’s faith which centered in Jesus Christ as the divine Lord (Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:4). Also Paul taught his converts, who were mainly converted to Christ from paganism, that Jesus was the universal Lord whose mission was wider than any Jewish hope could embrace. In Pauline thought, “Christ” is a richer term than “Messiah” could ever be, and one pointer in this direction is the fact that the early followers of the Messiah called themselves not converted Jews but “Christians,” Christ’s people (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16) as a sign of their universal faith in a sovereign Lord. See *Christ, Christology; Jesus Christ*.

Ralph P. Martin⁷

BRANCH—a symbol of kings descended from royal ancestors (Ezek. 17:3, 10; Dan. 11:7); of prosperity (Job 8:16); of the Messiah, a branch out of the root of the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1), the “beautiful branch” (4:2), a “righteous branch” (Jer. 23:5), “the Branch” (Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

Disciples are branches of the true vine (John 15:5, 6). “The branch of the terrible ones” (Isa. 25:5) is rightly translated in the Revised Version “the song of the terrible ones,” i.e., the song of victory shall be brought low by the destruction of Babylon and the return of the Jews from captivity.

The “abominable branch” is a tree on which a malefactor has been hanged (Isa. 14:19). The “highest branch” in Ezek. 17:3 represents Jehoiakim the king.⁸

BRANCH

The Hebrew words that are translated “branch” suggest the idea of growth (budding and sprouting). Metaphorically, the verbs picture one who will spring up from the line of David to fulfill the promise that there will be a descendant who will become God’s ideal, endless ruler. In both Testaments the figure of branches is used metaphorically of persons.

OT 1. Messiah the Branch

NT 2. Believers as branches

3. Israel as natural branches

⁷ Martin, R. P. (2003). [Messiah](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 1111–1116). Holman Bible Publishers.

⁸ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (p. 107). Harper & Brothers.

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OT—1. Messiah the Branch. Six passages in the OT identify the coming Messiah as the Branch (Isa 4:2; 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zec 3:8; 6:12). The NIV and the NASB capitalize “branch” in these verses to indicate the messianic identity. In Isa 11:1 the Hebrew reads *nēšer*, (“shoot” or “descendant”). In the others it is *šemaḥ*, (“sprout,” “growth,” or “branch”). Isa 4 associates the day of the Branch with the washing away of sins and with subsequent kingdom glory (4:2–6). Isa 11 describes the appearance of the Branch in the line of David (Jesse was David’s father)—the Messiah’s relationship with the Spirit of God (v. 2) and his ministry of setting all things right by bringing justice and righteousness to the earth (vv. 3–9). Jer 23 also emphasizes the ultimate role of the Messiah (vv. 5–6), and Jer 33 is crucial in identifying the Branch as the one who was to fulfill the Davidic covenant (vv. 15–22). **Covenant** Zec 3:9 emphasizes the removal of sins “in a single day” (v. 9), while 6:12 pictures reestablishment of the Lord’s temple by one who is both priest and king. Jesus alone fits every description. Jesus alone fulfills every role. **Christ**

NT—2. Believers as branches. John 15 contains Jesus’ picture of himself as a grapevine, God the Father as the farmer, and believers as the fruit-bearing branches (*klēma*). In this passage, Jesus is discussing fruitfulness, not salvation, and the images used must be interpreted with this in mind.

What Jesus describes is the conditions under which believers will produce spiritual fruit. **Fruit/Fruitfulness** He points out that the vine is the lifeforce; a branch that is not “in” the vine cannot bear fruit, for “no branch can bear fruit by itself” (v. 4). Believers remain “in” (fruitful relationship to) Christ by loving and obeying him. One who does not maintain this relationship loses contact with the vine and will be unfruitful. Such a branch withers and, as far as bearing fruit is concerned, is useless. It is the kind of branch most farmers clip off and toss out to be burned.

It is wonderful that God the Father prunes our useless branches back (v. 2) to restore us to fruitfulness! We are not just servants to God. We are his dearly loved friends (v. 13).

3. Israel as natural branches. Paul uses the image of tree branches (Gr, *klados*) in Ro 11 to explain God’s plan for the people of Israel. Israel’s special relationship to God is affirmed in the OT. But Paul explains that throughout sacred history, never has all of physical Israel experienced spiritual conversion. Yet within the natural line there have always been those who have responded to God in faith (Ro 11:1–10), even as many have responded to the gospel.

But what about the promises given to Israel as a people? Paul goes on, using the analogy of an olive tree. He shows that Gentiles have been grafted as branches into a tree whose root and stock are Jewish. Surely one day God will act to graft the natural branches back into the tree. This will happen, Paul affirms, “and so all Israel will be saved” (Ro 11:26). Jesus will return as Israel’s Messiah, and the promises given God’s OT people will be kept, for “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (Ro 11:29).

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In both Jn 15 and Ro 11, the image of branches is used to make points that are sharply defined in the context. Only with much caution should one consider extending the images of passages such as these to suggest they apply to issues that the passages do not deal with.⁹

The women of Zion (3:16–4:1)

This unit has two parts. The first consists of an indictment of the women of Zion (16) followed by an announcement of judgment on them (17). The second (3:18–4:1) is an announcement of judgment from beginning to end, but is closely related to the first part. Verses 18–23 of chapter 3 give more detail about the behaviour of Zion’s women, and 3:24–4:1 more detail about the judgment the LORD will visit upon them. As indicated earlier, it is likely that an original short oracle, delivered as the very words of the LORD (16–17), has been supplemented with an inspired commentary on it (3:18–4:1).

The reference to their *men* in verse 25 suggests that these *women of Zion* were married. Their husbands must have been rich to deck them out so extravagantly (18–23), and we need look no further than ‘the plunder from the poor’ in the previous oracle to guess how such wealth was acquired. The elders and leaders indicted in verses 14–15 were probably the husbands of these very women. The essential sin of the men was oppression; that of the women was ostentatious vanity. But clearly the common factor is ill-gotten wealth. The women have been partners in their husbands’ crimes.

The judgment to be visited on them is closely bound up with what will befall their men (25) and their city (26). As a result of the siege and fall of Zion, these women of Zion will suffer disfiguring disease (17a), sexual abuse (17b), captivity (*a rope*, 24), and bereavement (25). In desperation these proud women will finally be reduced to throwing themselves at any surviving male who will have them (4:1).¹⁰

6 *haughty ... outstretched necks ... ornaments jingling on their ankles*. Pictorial representation of common folk is rare in the period of the Bible, since the upper classes receive more attention. Commoners probably wore little personal adornment. Others used greater finery, including solid bronze rings placed on the ankle. The outstretched neck could be simply a prideful posture, or it could have been caused by wearing numerous necklaces, physically forcing the outstretched posture.

3:17 *bald*. Baldness, especially among women, was not customary, and most wore well-coifed hair. Shaving all or part of the head of someone was a sign of disrespect (7:20) or mourning (15:2).

⁹ Richards, L. O. (1999). In [*New international encyclopedia of Bible words: based on the NIV and the NASB*](#) (pp. 139–140). Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁰ Webb, B. (1996). [*The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles’ Wings*](#) (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; pp. 50–51). Inter-Varsity Press.

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A special haircut also seemed to be the mark of a slave, as noted in the Code of Hammurapi. The formally prim and proper upper-class women will be either humiliated or enslaved.

3:18–23 These verses give the most extensive list of personal adornment in the Bible. Some terms are rare and not at all clearly understood. “Finery” (v. 18) is the general term, encompassing the list that follows, referring first to jewelry (vv. 18–21) and then to clothing (vv. 22–23).

3:18 *bangles*. The ankle bracelets mentioned in v. 16. *headbands*. Ornaments resembling or representing the sun, showing Egyptian influence. They are common in Israelite seals. *crescent necklaces*. Like the moon, possibly showing influence from the moon-god of Harran or from the Canaanites at Ugarit.

3:19 *earrings*. Lit. “drops,” indicating their pendant shape; worn by men and women.

3:20 *headdresses*. Or turbans; were worn by Israel and her neighbors. *perfume bottles*. It is hard to imagine these serving as an item of clothing, so they are possibly a type of amulet, paralleling the “charms” mentioned next (cf. the same root, “whispering,” in v. 3 [“enchanter”]). These items have been found in excavations.

3:21 *signet rings*. Or seal rings; used by some officials as a symbol of authority and worn on the finger. They left an impression when pressed into a clay writing tablet (see note on 1Ki 21:8). Other rings were worn in the nose.

3:24 *well-dressed hair*. Hair not only distinguished individuals, as it does to today, but ethnic groups could be discerned by their differing hairstyles. Elaborate hairstyles were worn by gods and leaders in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Nice hair was prized, as shown by a text describing someone as “provided with beautiful hair.” Included among other gifts in a letter from Amarna were “29 silver ladles, with boxwood and ebony handles, which are for curling hair.” *baldness*. See note on v. 17.

3:26 *sit on the ground*. Extreme emotion is debilitating, affecting the ability to stand. Utnapishtim experienced this when he saw the destruction of his fellow human beings after the flood in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. He said, “Consequently I crouched, I sat down, I wept.”¹¹

Isaiah 3 NKJV

¹⁶ Moreover the Lord says:

“Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
And walk with outstretched necks
And wanton eyes,
Walking and mincing as they go,
Making a jingling with their feet,

¹⁷ Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab
The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion,
And the Lord will uncover their secret parts.”

¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the finery:
The jingling anklets, the ^[a]scarves, and
the crescents;

¹¹ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture](#) (pp. 1114–1115). Zondervan.

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¹⁹ The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils;

²⁰ The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands;

The perfume boxes, the charms,

²¹ and the rings;

The nose jewels,

²² the festal apparel, and the mantles;

The outer garments, the purses,

²³ and the mirrors;

The fine linen, the turbans, and the robes.

²⁴ And so it shall be:

Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench;

Instead of a sash, a rope;

Instead of well-set hair, baldness;

Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth;

And branding instead of beauty.

²⁵ Your men shall fall by the sword,

And your mighty in the war.

²⁶ Her gates shall lament and mourn,

And she *being* desolate shall sit on the ground.

CHAPTER 4

4:1 *seven women will take hold of one man.* One of the unfortunate results of war is the depletion of the male population, resulting in a higher ratio of women to men. In the ancient world, women were under the care of various men during their lives—first their fathers, then their husbands, then their sons. If these were lost through death or divorce, the woman and her children were placed in a precarious position, not the least reason being that land, the major resource of an agricultural people, was traditionally held by the man. Without a man and the sustenance supplied by the association with him, life was in jeopardy. This economic need is not the case here, however, since the women will provide their own provisions, apparently willing to bypass the traditional bride-price. *seven.* A significant number in the Bible, indicating completeness (e.g., 11:15; 30:26). One indication of this is that the symbol for seven in Akkadian also means “totality.” This number also seems to represent an unspecified high number, as today we might say, “I told you a hundred times.” Akkadian incantations parallel this use, e.g., when speaking of “seven young men and seven young women,” and Inanna is given “seven divine attributes.” *disgrace.* Points toward a societal rather than an economic lack. This word occurs in the context of rape, an unfortunate concomitant of war. The women are seeking either protection from such violation or a return of status to women who have already been raped and so humiliated—a state shared by a woman who was widowed (54:4).

4:3 *recorded among the living.* The righteous followers of God are inscribed in a book of life. This concept is also known in Mesopotamian thought, but instead of a book we read of a “Tablet of Destinies” (cf. 46:10), which contained the destiny of everything and was given by Tiamat to her general Kingu. In a prayer to Nabu (who subsequently controlled the tablets), Nebuchadnezzar II

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prays that his days be extended and that he experience old age. In the Babylonian “Poem of the Righteous Sufferer,” the sufferer in the end receives several blessings, including being reckoned among the living.

4:5 *cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night.* God’s protection and guidance were marked by these two elements when Israel departed from Egypt (Ex 13:21–22), and they will be restored to Israel’s survivors in the eschatological day of the Lord. The powerful radiance of Mesopotamian gods (cf. 2:10; see note there) is also associated with fire, smoke and cloud. In Ugaritic literature, several times the term translated in Hebrew as “cloud” is used of a divine messenger or herald, a representative of a god.¹²

5:1, 2 **Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard**, utilizing the form of a love song, may have been sung by the prophet during one of the harvest festivals. A message that might be rejected if delivered in a sermon might be received in a song. “Beloved” is a reference to the owner of the vineyard (v. 1).

5:3–7 **The Lord is the vineyard owner.** The vineyard represents God’s people. God had lavished loving care on His people and expected positive results. He was sorely disappointed. A play on words is evident (v. 7). The words for “justice” (Heb. *mishpat*) and “oppression” (Heb. *mispak*) are similar. The words for “righteousness” (Heb. *tsedaqah*) and “a cry” (Heb. *tse·aqah*) are also similar. The technical term for such a wordplay is paranomasia. God still looks for justice and righteousness that are exhibited in moral and ethical living from His people.

5:8–25 **Woe can carry the idea of a curse**, a reproach, or a funeral lament (vv. 8, 11, 18, 20–22). Here the word is used to announce judgment.

5:8–10 **This first woe** is a condemnation of those greedy for land and wealth. Despite their increased land holdings, production would decrease significantly (vv. 9, 10). God’s judgment would strike the object of their greed.

5:11–17 **The second woe** is upon Judah’s drunken inhabitants, who pursue intoxicating drink from dawn to dark. This intoxication even occurred at religious festivals (v. 12). In their drunken stupor, the inhabitants of Judah were not aware that God was at work in their midst, probably a reference to God’s work of judgment (v. 12). The wise men of Israel condemned excessive drinking (see Prov. 20, Alcoholism; 21:17; 23:29–35; 31:4, 5). The coming exile of God’s people is predicted. *She’ol* (Heb.) refers to the place of the dead (Is. 5:14).

¹² Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [*NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture*](#) (pp. 1115–1116). Zondervan.

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5:18, 19 The third woe is directed toward those who mocked God by continuing in their sin while challenging God to prove Himself to them. They implied that the Lord no longer had power to act. For “The Holy One of Israel,” see Isaiah 1:4–9, note.

5:20 The fourth woe encompassed those living in such confusion that they had lost the power of moral discernment. They were no longer able to distinguish between good and evil.

5:21 The fifth woe is aimed at the proud and arrogant who have cut themselves off from God, the source of true wisdom (see James 1:5; 3:17). Claiming to be wise and totally self-sufficient, they were, in reality, fools (see Rom. 1:22).

5:22–25 The sixth woe, like the second, condemned those who became intoxicated through drink and those who perverted justice by accepting bribes (see vv. 11–17). The guilty went free, while the innocent were condemned.

5:24, 25 Because Judah had rejected the Lord, He had rejected them. These verses may belong only with the sixth woe or may apply to all six woes. Judgment was inevitable. The “law of the LORD” refers to His revelation of His will (v. 24).

5:26–30 The sovereign Lord would command a foreign power to come against Judah. Assyria, though not identified by name in this passage, was that power (see Is. 10:5, 6). The Lord is in control of history and will accomplish His purposes.¹³

5:1 This beautiful “Song of the Vineyard” is an example of the sublime poetic style of Isaiah, unexcelled anywhere in literature. In this allegory the **Well-beloved** or **Beloved** represents Yahweh, and the **vineyard** represents Israel and Judah (v. 7).

5:2 Good grapes: God expected Israel and Judah to be an obedient, holy, witnessing people.

5:3 Wild grapes: The people produced bigotry, injustice, and idolatry instead of a witness to the nations; they did this in spite of God’s abundant love and care.

5:5 Trampled down: In judgment God will permit pagan invaders to trample down His people’s fair Land of Promise. Israel fell to Assyria in 721 B.C.; Judah fell to Babylon in 586 B.C.

5:7 Justice . . . oppression . . . righteousness . . . cry: In Hebrew this is a play on words with each pair of words having a similar sound. A possible English rendering might be: “He looked for justice, but behold, injustice; for equity, but behold, iniquity.”

5:8 In these verses **woe** is pronounced six times upon Israel and Judah, suggesting a funeral setting. Their sins are specified: 1) covetousness and self-indulgence (vv. 8, 10); 2) drunken revelry (v. 11, 12); 3) defiant vanity (vv. 18, 19); 4) moral subversion (v. 20); 5) inordinate pride

¹³ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). [*The Woman’s Study Bible*](#) (Is 5:1–26). Thomas Nelson.

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(v. 21); 6) perverted justice (vv. 22, 23). As a result of these perversions God will call for a foreign nation that will invade, devastate, and carry them away captive.

5:12 See section 5 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Is.

5:18 The rulers of Israel and Judah are so attached to sin that they drag it with them wherever they go.¹⁴

Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (3:1–4:1)

Two short judgment oracles dominate this rather long and complex unit. The first (3:13–15) is against the *elders* and other (male) *leaders*; the second (3:16–17) is against the women of Zion, their female counterparts. The first twelve verses of the chapter provide the background to the first oracle, climaxing in the prophet's cry in verse 12, *O my people, your guides lead you astray*. The final ten verses (3:18–4:1) are an amplification of the second oracle.

What is about to happen (3:1–7)

Verse 1 (*The LORD is about to take ...*) introduces a note of immediacy in contrast to the 'last days' perspective which has been dominant in chapter 2. But the two perspectives should not be too sharply distinguished, because, for Isaiah, every occasion when the LORD intervenes in judgment is a 'day of the LORD' and an anticipation (and therefore a warning) of the final one.

What is anticipated here is famine caused by siege (1), the removal of the community's leaders by death or deportation (2–3), and, as a consequence, a complete breakdown of social order (4–5). It was the Babylonians who would eventually bring this fully to pass more than a hundred years after Isaiah's death, as described with grim matter-of-factness in 2 Kings 25:1–12. But the prophet could already see in his own lifetime the direction in which things were moving (*cf.* 39:5–7); Babylon would finish what Assyria had begun.

Paradoxically, the final evidence of the collapse of order will be the desperate way the distraught populace will go about trying to re-establish it. The mere possession of a cloak will do as a qualification for leadership if only its owner can be persuaded to take it on. But no-one will be willing (6–7).

The mention of *the soothsayer*, the *skilled craftsman*, and the *clever enchanter* in verses 2–3 anticipates the denunciation of the leaders that will follow (12). But already it is clear that the rot had begun at the top.

Why it is going to happen (3:8–12)

¹⁴ Hayford, J. W., ed. (1997). [*Spirit filled life study Bible*](#) (electronic ed., Is 5:1–18). Thomas Nelson.

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With verse 8 we move from description to explanation. The prophet begins with the wickedness of the people in general (8–9), but then traces it back to bad leadership as its root cause (12). Like a skilful cameraman he first pans the turbulent crowd, and then zooms in on those chiefly responsible. The common people are in a sense victims (feel the pathos in the repeated *my people* of verse 12), but they have passed the point where their behaviour can be excused, for they have become openly defiant and quite brazen in their wickedness (8–9).

There is a paradox in verse 12a. The corrupt leaders are tyrants (they *oppress* the people), but the terms in which they are described (*youths, women*) suggest that their bad behaviour sprang from weakness. They copied the ways of the powerful nations they feared and so ended up being exactly like them. The people, in turn, became like their leaders (5).

But the general populace is not uniformly evil, and the LORD's judgment, when it comes, will not be an outburst of unbridled anger. It will be controlled and discriminating, sifting the righteous from the wicked and giving to each what their *deeds* deserve (10–11). The notion of a righteous remnant which will be preserved to form the nucleus of a new Zion is in fact quite fundamental to Isaiah's message, and will appear under a variety of images as the book proceeds.

Indictment of the elders and princes (3:13–15)

In the first twelve verses the LORD has been portrayed as a warrior ('the LORD Almighty', 3:1); now he is portrayed as judge (13). A hush descends as the heavenly court comes to order, for the divine judge has taken his place and the judgment foreshadowed in verses 1–12 is now to be put into effect. Isaiah has singled out the leaders as those chiefly responsible (12); now they are to be formally indicted by the LORD himself.

Leaders (14) is literally 'princes', men closely associated with the court and the royal family. The *elders* were a wider group, representing local communities. The charge brought against them both is oppression of *the poor*. They have used their position to exploit the very ones they should have protected. The language of the indictment is particularly strong (*ruined ... crushing ... grinding*), expressing the intensity of the LORD's revulsion at their actions. For the LORD is on the side of the poor, as the parallel between *my people* and *the poor* in verse 15 makes clear. Moreover, if he is presently acting as judge, this does not mean that he has relinquished his power to put his own righteous anger into effect. He is still *the LORD, the LORD Almighty* (15b), and there is surely an ominous ring to the reappearance of this expression at the very end of this unit. The divine judge will certainly avenge those who have been so grievously wronged.

It is sobering to reflect that the same high standards of accountability still apply today. Those who lead God's people are answerable, not just to those they lead, but to the Lord who has entrusted his precious people to them, and it is to him that they will finally give account for how they behave.³⁸ We should pray for them daily.

The women of Zion (3:16–4:1)

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This unit has two parts. The first consists of an indictment of the women of Zion (16) followed by an announcement of judgment on them (17). The second (3:18–4:1) is an announcement of judgment from beginning to end, but is closely related to the first part. Verses 18–23 of chapter 3 give more detail about the behaviour of Zion’s women, and 3:24–4:1 more detail about the judgment the LORD will visit upon them. As indicated earlier, it is likely that an original short oracle, delivered as the very words of the LORD (16–17), has been supplemented with an inspired commentary on it (3:18–4:1).

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The judgment to be visited on them is closely bound up with what will befall their men (25) and their city (26). As a result of the siege and fall of Zion, these women of Zion will suffer disfiguring disease (17a), sexual abuse (17b), captivity (*a rope*, 24), and bereavement (25). In desperation these proud women will finally be reduced to throwing themselves at any surviving male who will have them (4:1).

Beyond judgment—glory! (4:2–6)

The expression ‘in that day’ has run like a refrain through the whole preceding judgment section, from 2:6 to 4:1. In the foreshortening so typical of prophetic literature, the day of Zion’s fall has merged with the great and final ‘day of the LORD’, of which it is an anticipation. But now here in 4:2 the expression is used climactically as the prophet’s attention is fixed again on the very end of history, the goal towards which everything is moving under God. This vision of Zion’s glorious future, beyond judgment, is the climax of 2:6–4:6, just as the matching vision at the beginning of chapter 2 is the climax of 1:2–2:5.

The great, final day of the LORD, then, has a double aspect. It is both terrible (2:6–22) and glorious (4:2–6). But the way the text refers to glory as the climax reminds us that God’s ultimate purpose for his people is not destruction but salvation, a truth confirmed by the apostle Paul with resounding clarity in 1 Thessalonians 5:9: ‘God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (RSV). Peter is no less definite. ‘Through faith’, he says, ‘[we] are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time’ (1 Pet. 1:5). That salvation, which will be fully realized when Christ returns to draw history to its triumphant conclusion, is represented here under four images.

The Branch of the LORD (4:2a)

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In some later Old Testament books ‘the Branch of the LORD’ or simply ‘the Branch’ is used as a technical term for the Messiah, and the motif of a ‘shoot’, ‘branch’ or ‘root’ springing up (the terminology varies) will later be used in some fairly specific ways within the book of Isaiah itself.⁴⁷ Here, however, it seems best to take the full-grown plant, in conjunction with what follows, as a general image of the LORD’s saving purposes come to fruition and on display for all to see on the last day.

Every gardener knows how a healthy plant in full bloom reflects credit on the one who planted and cultivated it. That is why visitors are discreetly guided towards such prize specimens on their tours of the garden. In a similar way the salvation that the LORD will achieve for his people will reflect great credit on him on that final day. *The Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious.* The next three images reveal just what that salvation will involve.

A fruitful land (4:2b)

The fruitful *land* of Canaan had been God’s gift to the Israelites in the days of Joshua in fulfilment of the promises made to their ancestors. The land therefore had religious significance for them. It was a visible sign or sacrament of the grace that the LORD had shown in choosing them to be his people.

In Isaiah’s day that relationship was strained almost to breaking-point, and the land lay desolate and ravaged by Israel’s enemies, right up to the gates of Jerusalem itself (1:2, 7–8). But Isaiah was confident that the ancient promises would not fail. God would not utterly destroy the nation; nor would he divorce her permanently from the land. A remnant would survive and enjoy in full measure what had been promised to their fathers long ago. *The fruit of the land* would be their *pride and glory*. It is an image of abundant provision and deep contentment. Farmers would particularly appreciate this image, as gardeners would the previous one. The third is more attuned to city-dwellers like Isaiah himself.

A holy city (4:3–4)

Now the focus narrows from the land to *Zion* or *Jerusalem*, the city which had acquired a special significance for Israel in the time of David. In those days it had been holy in a double sense. It had been holy in that God, the Holy One of Israel, had chosen it as the place where David (his chosen king) and his descendants would rule over his people for ever, and where God’s people would assemble to meet with him in his temple.⁵¹ But it was also holy in the sense that it had exhibited in its corporate life the very character of the one who had chosen it. It had been ‘faithful’ and ‘full of justice’ (1:21).

The Zion of Isaiah’s day had become a corrupt, harlot city, but Isaiah never doubted that it was still chosen to play a key role in the LORD’s purposes. In these two verses he sees the Zion of the future inhabited by an elect remnant, living in a city which has been purged of its moral corruption by divine judgment.⁵⁴ Zion will then once more be holy in both senses: elect and faithful. The holy city represents perfect community.

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A canopy of glory (4:5–6)

The final image is of journey's end, of the pilgrim people of God at last secure in God's presence for ever. There are many allusions here to the period of the exodus. At that time Israel was protected and guided on its journey through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, the manifested presence of the LORD. That journey was punctuated by encampments, and at such times, according to the ancient record, the fiery cloud covered the tabernacle like a protective shield.⁵⁷ But the ideal which they hoped for, rest in the land, had never been perfectly achieved, even in the time of David. Now, in Isaiah's time, it seemed further off than ever. So, metaphorically at least, their pilgrimage continued.

Isaiah believed that the final encampment of God's people would be in the new Zion. There, at last, their journey would end. But notice the democratization of the ancient ideal which takes place here. In the final encampment the *glory* of the LORD's presence fills the whole camp, and the protecting *cloud*, like a vast *canopy* or pavilion, covers the entire site and all who are assembled there (5). There will no longer be any need for the tabernacle or temple, for the glory of the LORD will be directly accessible to all. And those with whom God is present in this way will be perfectly secure for ever (6). This is no out-of-date dream, but one which Jesus prayed to be realized, and which the apostle John sets before us again at the climax of the Bible as the vision of our own future in God which should still inspire us and draw us on.⁶⁰ We, too, are pilgrims.

A worthless vineyard (5:1–30)

The song of the vineyard (5:1–7)

Isaiah lives always with the tension between what will be and what is; between the glorious destiny which beckons Israel and the awful reality of its present condition. It is a tension which ultimately only the LORD can resolve. Here, once again, as in 2:6, we plunge from the heights to the depths as the prophet returns to the thankless task of exposing the sins of his fellows and warning of judgment to come.

But it will not be easy for him to gain a hearing for such an unpleasant message, and so he presents himself as a minstrel and beguiles his unsuspecting audience with a song. It is a striking example of just how creative and skilful the prophets could be in communicating their message (gospel preachers take note!).

The opening words of the song must have puzzled his original hearers as much as they puzzle us. Who is the prophet's 'beloved', and if it is a *song* he sings, why is it about his beloved's *vineyard* instead of about the beloved himself (1)? In fact, the 'love song' turns out to be a parable, and before long the entranced listeners find themselves face to face with its hard-hitting message. The prophet's beloved is the LORD, and Israel (here represented by Judah) is the LORD's vineyard. In spite of all the patient care he has lavished upon it, it has produced only worthless 'wild grapes'. Would he not be fully justified, then, in removing its protective wall and abandoning it?

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The end of the grape harvest, a traditional time for entertainment and festivities, may have provided the setting for the original performance of the song. Its occurrence at this particular point in the book has been anticipated by the use of ‘vineyard’ as a metaphor for Judah in 3:14. The *bad fruit* which the vineyard has produced is explained in the six ‘woes’ which follow it (5:8–25).

The song itself is in four parts. Verses 1–2 are an introduction which catches the attention of the audience and sets the scene; in verses 3–4 the LORD himself speaks and asks the audience for a verdict; in verses 5–6 the LORD, as owner of the vineyard, announces his own decision; and finally, in verse 7, the prophet again speaks in his own voice and makes a specific application to Israel.

Two matters are worthy of particular comment. First, Isaiah’s double reference to the LORD as *the one I love* and *my loved one* in verse 1 is bold, but not for that reason insincere or a mere literary conceit. Love for God is an important dimension of Old Testament piety, as both the law of Moses and the Psalms testify.⁶⁵ Isaiah loved the LORD passionately, and it was because of this that he could identify so closely with both the outrage and the grief that the LORD felt at the wilful sinfulness of the nation. (We should note this carefully if our religion has become passionless. Our capacity to share God’s anger can be an indicator of how much we really love him.) Finally, verse 7, which concludes the song, gives us further insight into Isaiah’s powerful use of language:

*He looked for justice (mišpāṭ) but saw bloodshed (mišpāḥ)
for righteousness (šēdāqâ) but heard cries of distress (šē’āqâ)*

The demand for social justice as a basic covenant obligation could scarcely be more succinctly and forcefully presented.

Bad fruit (5:8–25)

The six woes of this passage specify the ‘bad fruit’ of verses 2 and 4. The list is damning; greedy land-grabbing (8), drunken debauchery (11–12), arrogant defiance of God (18–19), self-justifying sophistry (20), conceit (21) and perversion of justice (22–23). Taken together, these woes probably reflect the conditions that developed in Judah during the reign of Uzziah (= Azariah, 791–740 BC). As we have already seen,⁶⁸ this was in many ways a golden age of impressive achievements, but it also had a darker side. A new, wealthy élite emerged, who grew more and more corrupt and oppressive as they became intoxicated (in more ways than one!) with materialism and the pursuit of pleasure. In the year that Uzziah died, as we see in the next chapter, Isaiah saw the LORD taking his place in the heavenly court to pass judgment on the nation. As well as documenting the charge of the preceding song, then, these woes provide the backdrop to Isaiah’s call which follows.

The passage as a whole is structured by the words *Woe* and *Therefore*. *Woe* introduces denunciations of particular sins; *Therefore* introduces the judgments which either have been or will be visited on the offenders. There is a growing intensity as the unit progresses: first one woe (8), then another (11), and then four strung together in quick succession (18, 20, 21, 22). Similarly,

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there is first a single announcement of judgment introduced by *The LORD Almighty has declared* in verse 9, then a double *Therefore* in verses 13 and 14, and finally another in verses 24 and 25, where the judgment takes on cosmic, world-shattering proportions (especially in 25). This is a passage of powerful denunciation, but also of deep pathos, for the cry of 'Woe' is capable of expressing both, and almost certainly does so here. Isaiah is no self-righteous, detached observer. The final woe he pronounces is on himself (6:5).

Here, then, is a classic passage on the corrupting power of riches (or at least of the desire to acquire them). The land-grabbing of verse 8 was contrary to the basic principle of the law of Moses that the LORD owned the land, and that all his 'tenants' were to have a fair share of it. The wealth was gained by oppression and could be held on to only by further oppression (23). When confronted with their sin, the offenders either became brazen (18–19) or resorted to specious arguments to justify their actions (20). But nothing could conceal the fact that they had *rejected the law of the LORD Almighty* (24). Pretending to be wise (21), they actually became fools. In their drunken debauchery they could no longer understand God's ways or see what he was doing (12; cf. 1:3).

In contrast to all this stands the God of *justice and righteousness* (16), whose word they have despised. God's holiness consists essentially in his moral character, and this means that he cannot be indifferent to evil. But the judgments foreshadowed here—desolation of *houses* and land (9–10), *exile*, famine and death (13–14)—will affect rich and poor, noble and commoner alike (13b, 14b). By their actions the ruling élite have brought about the ruin of the nation. How this will happen is explained in verses 26–30, which follow.

The vineyard ravaged (5:26–30)

The destroyer of the LORD's vineyard is to be a foreign invader, and he is to come at the LORD's express command (26). The phrase *lifts up a banner* is unexceptional in this military context, but the word *whistles* is more telling (cf. 7:18). It expresses the LORD's contempt for the arrogant pretensions of the great military powers who were struggling for control of Palestine. Their armies on the move, swift, disciplined, equipped and ruthless, inspired terror (27–30). But it was the message of Isaiah and the other eighth-century prophets that it was the LORD, not these nations, who called the tune. Nor is this a quaint view of history which can or should be relegated to a museum of intellectual antiquities. It is a biblical revelation about how history has always worked and still does today. The first Christians, in their time of testing, cried out to God in full confidence that the worldly powers ranged against them, both Jewish and Gentile, could do nothing but what God, by his power and will, 'had decided beforehand should happen'. Even Herod and Pontius Pilate, in conspiring to bring about the death of Jesus, had merely played roles that God had scripted for them.⁷⁴ 'The authorities that exist', Paul tells us, 'have been established by God', and the closing book of the New Testament points us with complete confidence to the day when God's lordship over the nations will be manifested in final judgment.⁷⁶

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Isaiah was absolutely certain of the LORD's sovereignty over history; he was using the nations to accomplish his purposes and would continue to do so. It is a theme that will be developed more fully as the book proceeds.

The invader is not named here, but is almost certainly Assyria. The last two lines of verse 25 will be heard again and again in chapters 9 and 10, where Assyria is explicitly in view. Judah had already begun to experience the LORD's hand *upraised* in judgment when the song of the vineyard was sung, but worse was to come.

Webb, B. (1996). *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings* (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; pp. 195–252). Inter-Varsity Press.