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A STUDY OF ISAIAH 1:1-5

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The Book of Isaiah: Repentance and a Righteous Life, Isaiah 1

God is bringing a formal indictment against the nation in this chapter. Israel was a theocracy, the “people of God,” as they were called. The whole nation, whether believers or unbelievers, were under the Law of Moses and accountable to it. In the Law, there were sections of blessing and cursing that were held out to the people. As it was, there were only a few believers, and they were hardly an influence over anyone.

Verse 1, The book of Isaiah is *the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah*. King Hezekiah of Judah had little choice but to surrender. He could retain his throne but would resume his status as vassal and would pay the annual tribute. In addition, he lost many of his cities and had to pay a large indemnity. Despite the losses and concessions, Judah did not go the way of Israel at this point, and so Hezekiah, who had instituted temple worship and ordered the copying of the sayings of Solomon, was considered a righteous king in the Bible. His son Manasseh was not.

Second Chronicles 32 seems to be the historical setting and records the invasion of Sennacherib of Assyria. In a wall relief from the Assyrian palace in Nineveh, the king notes “As for Hezekiah the Judean, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged forty-six of his fortified walled cities and surrounding smaller towns, which were without number.... I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil.” Sennacherib then besieged Jerusalem according to an archeological discovery called the Taylor Prism. “As for Hezekiah the Judean... I locked him up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage.”

Rebellion Against God Will Only Ruin Your Life

There are times when we are disobedient to God, His Word, and His will. Confession and repentance are required in order to retain God’s favor and fellowship. There are other times when we may become guilty of rebellion. Where we excuse ourselves, make a case for our disobedience, and argue with God over what is necessary. God will not tolerate the attitude of rebellion.

Verse 2 is the call to judgment. Their rebellion was based in ignorance and arrogance. Israel is the accused, God is the Judge and the Plaintiff, and *heaven and earth* is witness. It describes sin that is open aggression, and willful rebellion. *Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted against Me*. The contrast is with the generousness of God who reared and nourished them as children. They were dependent. God had brought them up. But they rebelled.

Verse 3 shows that their sin was ignorance. Even dumb animals do not bite the hand that feeds them, but Judah does! *An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master’s manger, but Israel does not know*. They were content with a facade of religiosity, but without the necessary lifelong faith, repentance, and personal trust.

Verse 4 is the full catalog of the “rebellion” of Israel and its graphic in nature. There are seven expressions for their sin, signifying how complete, comprehensive, and all-consuming it became. *They have abandoned the Lord, ... They have turned away from Him*. Their sin was corrupting their *sons who act corruptly!* Sin compounds its influence.

Verses 5-6 give us a personification of the Land as a beaten and bruised man. Their rebellion will bring utter ruin. *The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint*. The rest of the chapter describes the rebellious spiritual condition of Israel that prompted God’s decision to judge His people by means of invasion and then exile. While Isaiah prophesied in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the hope was that they would learn the lessons of judgment and exile that the northern tribes eventually experienced.