

Isaiah

INTRODUCTION

- Personal experience with the book – more recently a deeper application of idolatry
- *Read 1:1 and 6:1-13*
- Isaiah = Yesa-Yahu – *Yahweh is salvation*
- God can, must and will judge human rebellion but He is deeply burdened about the impact of His judgment; God disciplines to motivate a change of heart.
- God can, must & will also redeem rebellious people; Reconciliation to God is an expensive gift that He pays for and freely gives to any who turn to Him.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- **The History of the Divided Kingdom to the Time of Isaiah (1Ki.11- 2Ki.14; 2Chr.10-25)**
Note: See the enclosed handout entitled, *An Overview of Israel's History from Division to Return*; also, examine maps and time line overview handout.
- **The Situation in Isaiah's Time (2Kings 15-21; 2Chr.26-33)**
Note: See the enclosed handout entitled, *The Chronology of Isaiah's Lifetime*
- **Isaiah and the Promises of God**
If you want to understand God's actions, you must understand his plans & promises. Isaiah is rooted in the clash between the terms of the Mosaic covenant & those of the Abrahamic & Davidic covenants.

■ The Terms of the Covenants

The Mosaic Covenant

Exodus 20:1-17 (Deut. 5:6-21) – 10 commandments at Sinai (aka Horeb)¹
Deut. 4 (Deut.6-11, 28) – blessings for covenant fidelity & curses for covenant infidelity
Deuteronomy 31:14-32:47 - infidelity predicted

The Covenant of Moses is the backdrop for all the judgments of God found in Isaiah; it is also the backdrop for all the promises of redemption.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Gen 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (c.f. 15:1-21 for the cutting of the covenant)

This promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him was almost 1400 years past at this time.

¹ With details following from Exodus 20 – 31 and also in Deuteronomy & Leviticus

The Davidic Covenant

2 Samuel 7:4-16 That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David... (9) I will make your name great... (10) I will provide a place for my people Israel... so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed... (11) I will also give you rest from all your enemies... (12) I will establish a house for you... (13,16) Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

Psalm 89:3f; 26ff You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, (4) 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.' (28) and my covenant will never fail. (29) I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. (30f) [discipline for his son's if they sin] (34) I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered... (36) that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun..."

Psalm 132:11-18 The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne—if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever.".....

Just under three centuries before Isaiah's ministry, God made a promise to the king of Israel, David². He promised several things but one of the more startling was that David would be the father of a lineage that would produce Israeli kings forever.

Three hundred years after the promise, at a time when the entire nation seemed to be spiraling toward oblivion and just prior to events that would make the most ardent believer begin to doubt, God reminded them of that promise and began to explain more fully what it meant.

The salient features of this contract between God and David are partly unilateral and partly bilateral and include the following:

- Unconditional features
 - ⇒ David will be a very successful leader of Israel and will finally have peace
 - ⇒ David's son will be the next in an eternal dynasty of Israeli kings (2Sam.7:13,16; Ps.89:4,29,36; Ps.132:12)
 - ⇒ Israel will have a land of its own (2Sam.7:10)
 - Conditional features - Any Davidic king that disobeys God will be disciplined by God (2Sam.7:14; Ps.89:30-33) even to the extent that a particular Davidic lineage may be disallowed from the dynastic covenant (Ps.132:12)
- Would God Reneg on His Covenants with Abraham and David?
- How could a soon-to-be extinct nation, bless all nations?
- How could a dead-end lineage produce an eternal king?
- A Davidic king would arise in the next century whose sins were so repugnant that God declared none of his descendants would sit on the throne (Jeremiah 22:30)³
- Isaiah's Revelation: The Abrahamic & Davidic Covenants Will Converge Upon the Messiah
An Eternal "Anointed One" Will Fulfill the Davidic Covenant.

² David's reign ran from 1010-970. Isaiah's ministry ran from around 740-680

³ Jeconiah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin); see 2Ki.24:8-17 and 2Chron.36:9-10

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Isaiah 11:1-10 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

[See also, Micah 5:1-5, a contemporary of Isaiah]

A Servant of God Will Fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant (c.f. Gen.12:1-3)

Isaiah 42:1, 6 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations....(6) I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 49:5-8 And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him...He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, "Kings shall see and arise, Princes shall also bow down; Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You." Thus says the LORD, "In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages

Isaiah 50:6-7; 51:2 I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; ..."Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him."

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; ...Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That

we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

- **Isaiah and Idolatry**

Isaiah focuses a lot of ink on the topic of idolatry.⁴

At its heart idolatry is giving something in creation the reverence, trust & service that rightfully belongs to the Creator (Romans 1:18-23).

In this sense, anything that stands in the place of God is an idol whether it is an external image or an internal craving (Colossians 3:5 ‘over-desire’ = idolatry).

A good case can be made from the Bible that we become like what we serve.

In Adam’s case he became as prideful, rebellious and deceptive as the serpent.

In Israel’s case at Sinai they became as stiff-necked and insensate as their gold calf.

In Israel’s case in Isaiah’s time they had become as blind, deaf and impotent as their various gods (Isaiah 6:9-13 compare with Psalm 115:4-8 & Deuteronomy 29:4).

As we consider our hyper-desire for approval, significance, pleasure & control we would do well to appreciate the spiritual risk and ruin we invite into our own souls.⁵

Inordinate emotions can clue us in on the idolatry underneath.⁶

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read II Kings 15-21 and II Chronicles 26-33⁷
- Read Isaiah 1-16
- Memorize the following verses:
 - Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he? 2:22
 - If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all 7:9b
- Read the article by McKenzie

⁴ 1:29 (oaks, gardens); 2:8,18, 20; 31:7; 40:18-20; 42:17; 44:9-20; 45:16-20; 48:5; 57:13; 65:3

⁵ Ken Sande writes that idols are formed when our desires become demands about which we punish others when they interfere with them.

⁶ anxiety when our idol is threatened; anger when it is blocked & devastation when it is lost

⁷ If you have time, read through the entire books of II Chronicles, I and II Kings, it will be enlightening.

