

# PM Isaiah 1

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 July 2024

Preacher: Rev Jonathan Watson

[ 0 : 00 ] Bible on page 683. We're going to read the whole chapter.

Isaiah chapter 1. The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib. But Israel does not know.

My people do not understand. Ah, sinful nation. A people laden with iniquity. Offspring of evildoers.

[ 1 : 16 ] Children who deal corruptly. They have forsaken the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel. They are utterly estranged.

Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds. They are not pressed out, or bound up, or softened with oil.

Your country lies desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. In your very presence, foreigners devour your land.

It is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

[ 2 : 23 ] If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Give ear to the teachings of our God, you people of Gomorrah.

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices, says the Lord? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts.

I do not delight in the blood of bulls and of lambs and of goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?

Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations, I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

[ 3 : 37 ] Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves.

Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes. Cease to do evil.

Learn to do good.

Seek justice. Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

[ 4 : 44 ] If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

How the faithful city has become a whore. She who was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.

Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.

They do not bring justice to the fatherless and the widow's cause does not come to them.

Therefore, the Lord declares, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will get relief from my

enemies and avenge myself on my foes.

I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.

[ 6 : 01 ] And I will restore your judges as at the first and your counsellors as at the beginning.

Afterward, you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Zion shall be redeemed by justice and those in her who repent by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be broken together and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. for you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers and like a garden without water and the strong shall become tender and his work a spark and both of them shall burn together with none to quench them.

Amen. May God bless this reading to us and help us to understand its message. before we begin. I suppose the message of Psalm 2 and Isaiah chapter 1 could be summed up in the phrase there is no refuge from the Lord except refuge in the Lord.

Let's turn to Isaiah chapter 1 to this passage that we read together just a few moments ago. The opening verse of Isaiah chapter 1 really introduces us to the massive sweep of the whole book of this Old Testament prophet.

[ 8 : 00 ] An Old Testament prophet who has sometimes been described as the evangelical prophet. Because it's true to say that there is a great amount of gospel in his prophetic book.

His is a message that is generously sprinkled with mercy. But it's also true to say that Isaiah's message is primarily a message of judgment upon iniquity, rebellion, sin and sin.

Verse 1 tells us a very important thing about Isaiah's prophecy. It tells us about a vision that Isaiah saw.

And that is important. Something that we must take note of and underline. Because it teaches us that this message did not originate in Isaiah, in Isaiah's mind.

But it was given to him by God. Isaiah, like all the other prophets, is merely an ambassador of heaven.

[ 9 : 19 ] He is God's mouthpiece, declaring faithfully God's message to the nation and indeed to the nations of the world.

There are no additions from Isaiah. There are no subtractions from Isaiah. What he is delivering is the pure and unadulterated word of God.

Therefore, we need to heed what he says. Because it is not Isaiah who is preaching, but it is God who is speaking through him.

And remember the words of the Apostle Peter about Old Testament prophecy. He said, no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. If that was the case, we could take it or leave it.

It would make no difference. But Peter says, no, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

[ 10 : 30 ] You find those words in 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 20 and 21. Here is a man who is speaking God's word as he is upheld and guided and carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And dear friends, we are listening to nothing less. We are reading nothing less than the Word of God. We are hearing nothing less than the voice of God.

And so the message comes to us. He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying. God speaks today through his word.

Now, the vision or revelation that Isaiah was given runs right through the reigns of four of the kings of Judah, beginning with the reign of Uzziah and extending on through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

And I want us to look at the first section, verses 2 to 9 of the chapter. And I want us to read them once more because I'm so concerned that the Word of God takes root in our minds and in our hearts.

[ 11 : 48 ] Let us expose ourselves. Let us soak ourselves in the Word of God this evening. Look at verses 2 to 9, this first section of the message.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly. They have forsaken the Lord.

They have despised the Holy One of Israel. They are utterly estranged. Why will you be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel?

The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds. They are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.

[12:53] Your country lies desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. In your very presence foreigners devour your land. It is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.

And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.

This first section of the chapter sets out in such clear terms just how far the nation of Israel has fallen from its high and privileged position as the people of God.

God himself had raised up the nation of Israel. Verse 2. Indeed, he had reared them and brought them up like children.

And like wicked and ungrateful children, they had rebelled against me, he says. You can feel the pathos, can't you, in these words.

[14:09] What a tragedy it is when children turn against the loving parents who reared them and brought them up.

Maybe some of us know that pain and grief and sorrow in our hearts, but here is the Lord likening himself to a loving and generous parent, having brought up and reared children and yet they have rebelled against me.

And then look at these next words. An ox or a donkey knows more of its master, knows where its true home lies than Israel, privileged Israel.

What tragic words these are. The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib. these foolish obstinate dumb animals.

They know their owner. They know their master's crib. But in contrast Israel does not know.

[15:31] My people do not understand. As we contemplate the opening words of this chapter we see how God through his prophet also calls in to the courtroom almost as it were.

The heavens and the earth to observe how unnatural and how astonishing Israel's behaviour is. Hear heavens give ear earth for the Lord has spoken.

Look at these children whom I have brought up and reared. They do not know. They do not understand.

They have rebelled against me. Do you see how the heavens and the earth are summoned to listen in to the rebuke that God delivers through his prophet to the nation?

Why does he do that? Why does he summon the heavens and the earth to listen in? Because I think he wants to emphasise the sheer enormity of the sin and of the rebellion.

[16:51] The sheer immensity of Israel's rebellion. And because there is a sense in which the well-being even of the whole world, even of the whole universe and cosmos depends on whether God's people obey or disobey God's word.

Sin has effects that ripple out from the sinner like the effects of a stone being thrown into a millpond. Sin and its effects and consequences and the judgment that comes upon it affects everything. You remember how the Apostle Paul says something about this in his letter to the Romans chapter 8 in which we're told that as a result of the fall the creation itself was subject to bondage to corruption. Presently the creation which was subjected to futility will be one day set free from its bondage to corruption and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

And the Apostle Paul speaks about the whole creation which has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. It's longing for that day when Christ returns and the creation itself will enter into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

[18:27] So man's fall into sin has tremendous consequences for us for the universe for society for families as well as for individual sinners too.

And then look at verse 4 Ah sinful nation a people laden with iniquity offspring of evil doers children who deal corruptly they have forsaken the Lord they have despised the Holy One of Israel they are utterly estranged.

What a dreadful description that is. And what a diagnosis of the trouble is given there in the second half of verse 4 They have forsaken the Lord they have despised the Holy One of Israel they are utterly estranged.

That's the heart of the problem. And so God calls on the heavens and the earth to listen in to his word of judgment on the sin of his people Israel.

And then look at verses 5 to 9 of this opening section which describe the devastation of the land as a result of the people's rebellion against God.

[ 19 : 54 ] Now it's easy to take these words as a metaphorical pictorial description one that paints a picture with words of the state of the country but it may well be the case that what is being described here in such vivid terms is what actually took place when Judah was invaded by Sennacherib's Assyrian army in 701 BC.

And that event is often taken in scripture as a kind of foretaste or advertisement of the judgment of God to come.

Quite often in scripture we find these events that take place in the history of Israel yes they are real events but they have a greater prophetic significance.

They are foreshadowings of a coming end of the world judgment. And if these were bad think of what the final great day of judgment is going to be like.

So great is the desolation described here that the prophet says in verse 9 if the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors we should have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.

[ 21 : 39 ] sometimes we think and act just like the Old Testament Israelites and we think that we are better or superior to other people that we're not as great sinners as other people are.

well what a shock it must have been to the people of Judah and Jerusalem when they heard the words of Isaiah's vision or revelation from God that described them in terms of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What a shock it must have been to these people to hear the Lord's prophet put them on the same level as those abominably wicked cities like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Cities you remember from Genesis that were destroyed by fire from heaven and whose people were wiped clean off the face of the earth.

It was only God's grace and mercy that prevented the destruction that Israel deserved from not being total and final in this instance.

[ 23 : 05 ] For the Lord in his mercy had left them a few survivors even though they deserved the same judgment as fell on Sodom and Gomorrah.

We're reminded aren't we of those words in Romans all have sinned and come short of the glory of God that the wages of sin is death.

All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

None is righteous no not one no one understands no one seeks God all have turned aside together they have become worthless no one does good not even one there is no fear of God before their eyes.

this is what we deserve if truth be told because we have sinned and our sin flows from a heart that is in rebellion against God we have forsaken the Lord the only reason why we're not in hell this evening suffering the endless wrath of God is because God has had mercy upon us.

[ 24 : 54 ] So having looked at the opening verses to this chapter I want us to take a broad overview of the rest of the chapter and just to pick out three key points three key thoughts that help us follow the movement of Isaiah's message through this chapter and the first point is this Israel is condemned for her corrupt and insincere worship and in order to grasp this let's read again verses 10 through to 17 of chapter 1 hear the word of the Lord you rulers of Sodom give ear to the teaching of our God you people of Gomorrah what to me is the multitude of your sacrifices says the Lord I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well fed beasts I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of goats when you come to appear before me who has required of you this trampling of my courts bring no more the offerings incense is an abomination to me new moon and sabbath and the calling of convocations

I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates they have become a burden to me I am weary of bearing them when you spread out your hands I will hide my eyes from you even though you make many prayers I will not listen your hands

are full of blood wash yourselves make yourselves clean remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes cease to do evil learn to do good seek justice correct oppression bring justice to the fatherless plead the widow's cause I want you to notice that the Lord is addressing his people in these verses with what one commentator calls dripping sarcasm notice how he addresses his covenant people in verse 10 you rulers of

Sodom you people of Gomorrah were these not the covenant people whom God brought into covenant with himself and gave him gave them his oracles and his sacrificial system and his tabernacle and temple and priesthood yet he addresses them as the rulers of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah why is that notice too how the people of Israel have maintained the ordained sacrificial system and all of its appointed feast days here it speaks about new moons and sabbath days and so on but look at what God says what to me is the multitude of your sacrifices I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams

I do not delight in the blood of bulls bring no more vain offerings incense is an abomination to me your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates they have become a burden to me now why is that are these not the things that God had commanded in the Old Testament law and now he says I don't want them anymore what's what's happening here what's going on why is this what is the reason why the Lord is saying these things well the verses tell us the reason God is saying this the reason God is rising up and taking action in this way is because the weak are being oppressed and because there is such corruption among the people and especially among the princes the governors the government of the day the covenant

God made with Israel at Sinai under Moses and which the people swore to accept and uphold has been broken and broken in the most egregious ways and in the law covenant there was a stipulation concerning a rebellious son and you can read about it in Deuteronomy chapter 21 and verses 18 to 21 I'll read it to you listen to these words and remember how God has described his nation as children whom he has brought up and reared what do you do with a son who has been brought up and yet has rebelled against his parents and refuses to repent there's a stipulation in the law it reads like this if a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother and though they discipline him will not listen to them then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives and they shall say to the elders of the city this our son is stubborn and rebellious he will not obey our voice he is a glutton and a drunkard then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones so you shall purge the evil from your midst and all

[ 31 : 17 ] Israel shall hear and fear and this in effect is what the Lord is doing to his rebellious son oppression of the weak and corruption in government have reached such a pitch that the Lord is going to act in judgment in line with the terms of the covenant and he's going to bring judgment upon Israel his rebellious son and it's not as if this is all happened out of the blue but the Lord has sent prophet after prophet after prophet to bring discipline to his wayward son and they have rejected the Lord's messengers and now judgment comes you see the

Lord cannot and will not turn a blind eye to sin the violations of his law he will rise up and deal with and so that's the first key thought in the second part of the passage God hears is condemning Israel for her corrupt and hypocritical worship they come to the church they sing God's praises they bow their heads in prayer they listen to God's word they give their tithes and offerings but then they go out unchanged and continue to forsake the Lord and walk in their evil ways and God has had enough and so he condemns Israel for her corrupt and hypocritical worship and aren't there lessons that we can learn from that in this 21st century do the

Lord's words not say something to us on this I desire mercy covenant faithfulness mercy and not sacrifice you remember where those words come from from Samuel's rebuke of Saul who dissipated the Lord but who had offered sacrifice and he says Samuel said has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams for rebellion is as the sin of divination and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry because you have rejected the word of the Lord he has also rejected you from being king we can come to the church we can come even to a free church we can go through the motions of worship but unless we are willing to obey the

Lord's voice unless we are willing to repent and to trust him as our saviour our worship is as evil in the Lord's eyes as divination and iniquity and idolatry and then the second key thought in this passage is that Israel is invited by this God to receive forgiveness and cleansing that's almost

incomprehensible isn't it after all that we've read after this great wickedness and rebellion in Israel God nevertheless says in verse 18 come now let us reason together says the Lord though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they are red like crimson they shall become like wool my friends it's so vitally important that we grasp this gospel truth that with Israel in ancient times as with us today it is not taking part in worship the worship of God it is not coming to church and reading the Bible and saying our prayers and singing the Lord's praises and giving our tithes and offerings that triggers forgiveness but it is repentance it is repentance look at the words of verse 20 if you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land the judgment threatened for obstinacy and impenitence will not take place if you are willing and obedient instead of judgment you will be blessed and prospered and shall eat the good of the land but now [ 37 : 10 ] I also look at the alternative to being willing and obedient in verse 20 but if you refuse and rebel you shall be eaten by the sword it spells it out in such clear terms such a stark contrast here the only alternative to repentance is judgment as sure as God's judgment fell upon ancient Israel as sure and certain it will fall upon all who remain hardened in heart obstinate rebellious and impenitent now later in this great prophecy of Isaiah no wonder we call him the evangelical prophet the basis for such forgiveness will be gloriously set forth God will give Isaiah a vision of the Lord's servant who was obedient where

Israel the nation was disobedient and who was then led like a lamb to the slaughter these are Isaiah's words but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all that's the basis upon which God offers forgiveness and cleansing to the rebellious whether we face God's blessing or God's judgment very much depends on our response to that invitation if it's a small word but it has massive ramifications if you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land but if you refuse and rebel you shall be eaten by the sword for the mouth of the Lord has spoken oh that we all might learn from these precious

Old Testament scriptures scriptures that the devastating judgment and oppression and exile that the Jewish nation suffered which we read about in the latter part of the Old Testament was not necessary it was not necessary for had they repented as Isaiah chapter 1 verses 18 and 19 indicate they would have been forgiven they would have been cleansed of their sin they would have been restored they would have been blessed and prospered but alas as the Apostle John writes men loved darkness rather than light and will not come into the light lest their deeds be exposed that makes me want to ask you do you prefer sin to salvation do you love greed more than grace peace and then the third and final thought deal with it just in a moment in wrath the Lord remembers mercy for Zion which often in scripture very often in scripture represents the people of God for Zion we are told in verse 27 will one day be redeemed by justice and those who repent by righteousness this last section from verse 24 to the end of the chapter tells us something wonderful about God tells us that God will not be defeated by man's rebellion and sin his purposes will not be thwarted Zion shall be redeemed the rest of the scriptures tell us how that's going to happen Zion shall be redeemed God's people shall be saved but notice that in these words we are taught that there will be no final redemption that ignores justice and righteousness the way

God saves the way God redeems will be in righteousness and will be in justice sin will be dealt with the law will be upheld God's honor and name will be intact he will do it in justice and in righteousness and we see that most clearly don't we in the cross where God's love and justice meet John in his first epistle brings us out so clearly when he says that if we confess our sins he is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness how does the justice of God we think of the love and grace of God leading us to salvation but how does the justice of

[ 43 : 18 ] God work towards our salvation because when Jesus died he was bearing our sin and the justice of God demanded that our sins be punished and when Jesus bore our sins and suffered on the cross made a curse for us in accordance with the terms of the law God's law God's justice was perfectly vindicated our sins were dealt with justly the penalty was paid and pardon bought so that sinners at last to him were brought as the hymn says and so whenever I confess my sins I look up to a God and I say in the words of Augustus

Top Lady's hymn payment God cannot twice demand first at my bleeding surety's hand and then again from mine it would be unjust for God to punish the same sin twice and so because Jesus Christ my surety the one who has taken on all my legal responsibilities and liabilities has suffered

and died in my place bearing my sin justice demands that I be forgiven and the love of God agrees with God's justice Zion shall be redeemed by justice and those in her who repent by righteousness but the other side of the coin must be grasped those who are not found in Christ those who are not trusting in Christ as their saviour as their atonement as their propitiation the sacrifice that removes God's wrath by taking away their sin must bear the punishment for their sin in themselves and those are dreadful words but rebels and sinners shall be broken together and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed for they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen that's speaking about the false worship that they undertook alongside the worship of Jehovah they worship false gods in these sacred oaks and in these sacred gardens for you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers and like a garden without water and the strong shall become tender and his work a spark and both of them shall burn together with none to quench them just as Jesus Christ endured the whole of wrath divine. So the rebel and the unrepentant sinner shall endure the whole of wrath divine forever and forever. How do you respond then to the vision of Isaiah, bearing in mind that this did not originate in man but was a revelation given to this man by the living God. [ 47 : 46 ] Judgment mercy. Let us all embrace the mercy offered in the gospel that God commissioned this man to proclaim to rebellious sinful people. Let us pray. Our heavenly Fatherska.