

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH - CHAPTERS 2-11

The opening verse of the book of Isaiah sets the scene for his 58+ years of faithful ministry. He began in the reign of Uzziah, personally faithful but a weak leader. Jotham, his son followed his father's example but also failed to extend this into his government of his country. Not surprisingly Ahaz, the next king, did not even find the personal faith of his father and grandfather so conditions in his society slipped further away from God's plan. Hezekiah, his son, found his way back perhaps through the influence of Isaiah to a quality of relationship with God which had not been seen since the time of David. His leadership was outstanding and enabled his people to overcome immense challenges. Sadly after a great beginning he lost his way supposing God could not manage without him. His arrogance undermined the generations to follow. Manasseh, part of the product of those disappointing years, destroyed all that had been gained and finally according to Jewish history killed Isaiah. Isaiah lived and spoke through all these ups and downs of leadership in his country. His message never changed - the coming Messiah.(1:1)

The rest of chapter 1 talks of sin and judgement and the need for repentance and reconciliation with God leading to new life. Before he could begin to offer the solution, Isaiah had to define the problem. A doctor will not prescribe a medicine until he has explained the patient's diagnosis. In this case the diagnosis was simple, rebellion, as of children against their parents. Even domesticated animals know their masters so why do God's children pretend they do not know their Father?(1:2,3)

The choice to rebel leads to a lifelong twisted attitude, iniquity, which now colours everything we do, think, or say, and is passed on to the next generation, as Judah's kings had passed their problems to their successors. But the key to all wrongdoing is in our attitude to God, our dismissing of Him as having any value or role in the direction of our lives.(1:4)

Rebellion leads to self-harm in which we beat up our whole lives and relationships and refuse any treatment for the wounds we cause ourselves. The damage spreads from us to our entire society, destroying what might have been, leaving us victims of a greedy world. God put His people in the world to be 'the salt of the earth.'(Matt.5:13) but because of our rebellion we failed to be this. But the Lord always has a few people like the survivors of Sodom and Gomorrah.(1:5-9)

Is the treatment religious ceremonies? Old Testament sacrifices or New Testament church services and prayer meetings will be as useless and meaningless as they would have been in Sodom and Gomorrah where no change of heart about their perverted behaviour had taken place. In our large, noisy prayer meetings we will be talking to ourselves. These things do not take away our guilt as rebels.(1:10-15)

There is only one answer to blood-stained hands, a thorough wash, not just of the outside but also the inside which is where God sees. Repentance is a change of heart and mind from rebellion to service. It shows as a desire to treat people well, standing against those who oppress the needy, and caring for the widows and orphans. The patient has a simple choice, have sin cleansed with rebellion ended or continue to go his own way and suffer the terrible consequences.(1:16-20)

The image now changes from rebellion to marital unfaithfulness, a picture often used by the Old Testament prophets,(Jer.2:20; Hos.4:11-15) and taken up in the New Testament.(Rev.17:1) God's people are to be like a bride to Christ, the bridegroom.(Eph.5:22-33; Rev.21:2) The results of unfaithfulness to Him have been violence, corruption and the neglect of the poor.(1:21-23)

If we do not deal with rebellion and corruption God will have to act to cleanse His world not just of sin and but also of those sinners who persist in opposing Him. His purpose however will always be the restoration of His kingdom, His family, beginning with faithful leaders. Make up your mind! Repent and be redeemed or remain a rebel, holding to your other gods which have nothing to give you and will burn up with you like rubbish in God's final judgement.(1:24-31)

But the problem is HOW can sin be washed away, sinners redeemed and right living restored? Each chapter explains a different aspect of God's answer, Jesus Christ.

Q.1. How is Christ pictured in chap 2? In what way can we even today experience Him in the way described?(I Jn.2:27; Matt.16:16,18; I Cor.10:4) What did they need to do to be saved? How could they 'enter the rock'? (v.10) What would be the result of refusing to be saved?

Q.2. How is Christ represented in chapter 3? (see Jn.5:22-29) What will be some of the conditions among a people soon to face judgement?

Q.3. What symbol of Christ is used in chap.4? Where else is the same symbol used in the Old Testament,(Jer.23:5; 33:15; Zech.3:8;6:12) and how is the same idea developed in the New Testament?(Jn.15:1-8; Matt.2:23) List the different ideas of salvation in this chapter.

Q.4. How does Jn.15 help to explain chap.5 and vice versa? How does spiritual unfruitfulness show in our lives and with what result in the future of our society?

Q.5. Chapter 6 is Isaiah's personal testimony of his call to be a prophet. How is it similar to what should happen in each of our Christian lives? Verses 9 and 10 are quoted by Jesus in Matt.13:14,15. Do they mean that God does not want some people to understand the gospel and be saved?

Q.6. What does chapter 7 promise about Jesus Christ? Where is this promise fulfilled in the New Testament?(Matt.1:18-25) What was the situation in chapter 7? How does this promise of Christ fit into this situation?

Q.7. How does chapter 8 look forward to Jesus Christ? Where does the New Testament quote verse 14 and to teach what idea about our relationship with Jesus Christ?(I Pet.2:6-8) How is this same idea developed through chapter 8?

Q.8. Chapter 9 explains more about the child who is to born.(7:14) What important new facts does it give us about who Jesus is, where His ministry would begin and what His work would be?(Matt.4:15,16; 28:18; Lk.1:32,33; 2:11; Jn.3:16; I Cor.15:25) How did the people accept this message in those days?

Q.9. What work would Christ 'complete on Mt. Zion'?(10:12) Chapter10 talks of an axe, a fire and a yoke. How are these pictures used in the New Testament to explain the work of Jesus Christ?(Lk.3:9,16;; Matt.11:28-30)

Q.10. In what way does chapter 11 look forward to Christ? How can we experience today what Isaiah here promises He will do in future?(Matt.3:16; Jn.1:32; 16:13; Acts 13:23; Eph.1:17,18; 6:14; I Cor.1:30; II Tim.1:7; Rev.5:5; 22:16)