

Isaiah One: A Message for the Church Today

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | December 31, 2020



Isaiah is called the gospel prophet, the prophet who brings the good news. It's in the book of Isaiah that we find the beautiful description of the coming Messiah, who becomes a real human:

For to 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 (9:6, 7 NIV84).

In Isaiah 53, we find the powerful prophetic description of Jesus' mission to take upon Himself our sin-sick condition, to suffer and die to procure the remedy to sin. We read that by "his stripes we are healed"—yet that we would miss the truth that Jesus was suffering to cure the sin condition and heal humankind and, instead, draw the false conclusion that it was God who was punishing Him:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, **yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted** (53:4 NIV84).

Oh, how Christians have misunderstood! We have failed to fully realize what it means that God so loved

the world that He sent His only Son. It was the Father's will to send Jesus to fulfill Their joint purpose of destroying the devil and his power (Hebrews 2:14), annihilating death (2 Timothy 1:10), and restoring humankind to sinless perfection (1 John 3:8; Hebrews 5:9, 8:10; Ephesians 2:15). They accomplished this through Jesus becoming a real human, taking the sin condition upon Himself, being tempted in every way like us (Hebrews 4:15), and overcoming. It was the Father's will and the Son's will for Jesus to be crushed by our sin-sick condition in order to overcome and cure the condition and thereby provide remedy to all who trust Him. Just as Paul wrote:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21, 22 NIV84).

And God, seeing the saving result of the suffering of Jesus, was satisfied with the result (Isaiah 53:11): humankind saved and restored to eternal life!

Yes, Isaiah proclaimed the gospel—the good news about God's character of love and the promised Messiah to provide remedy to our terminal sin condition, so that by faith in Him we may be healed. Praise God!

But I wonder, if Isaiah came to us, to our Christian churches today, and spoke to us the way he spoke to Israel, what would be our response? Would we rejoice? Would we recognize his words as a message from God, or would we become angry and deny the message was from God?

Imagine sitting in your church pew when a man, claiming to be a messenger from God, speaks the following, adapted from chapter 1 of Isaiah, to your church. How would you react? .

3. Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth!
For the Lord has spoken:
"I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
4. The ox knows his master,
the donkey his owner's manger,
but [Christians do] not know,
my people do not understand."
5. Ah, sinful [church],
a people loaded with guilt,
a brood of evildoers,
children given to corruption!
[You] have forsaken the Lord;
[You] have spurned the Holy One of Israel
and turned [your] backs on him.
6. Why should you be beaten anymore?
Why do you persist in rebellion?
Your whole head is injured,
your whole heart afflicted.
7. From the [bottom] of your foot to the top of your head
[nothing is healthy]—
only wounds and welts

and open sores
[that are not cleaned and] bandaged
or soothed with [ointment].

8. Your countries are [decaying],
your cities [are burned with fire and looted];
[your business are being ruined]
right before you,
laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.
9. The [Bride of Christ] is left
like a [open store in a riot],
like a [unlocked car during a crime spree],
like a city under siege.
10. Unless the Lord Almighty
had left us some survivors,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.
11. Hear the word of the Lord,
you [church-leaders] of Sodom;
listen to the law of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!
12. "The multitude of your [rituals]—
what are they to me?" says the Lord.
"I have more than enough [baptisms],
[ordinations] and [foot washing services];
I have no pleasure
in [your praise bands or communion services].
13. When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?
14. Stop [preaching] meaningless [sermons]!
Your [prayers] are detestable to me.
[Sundays], Sabbaths and [camp meetings]—
I cannot bear your evil assemblies.
15. Your [Christian concerts] and your [worship services]
my soul hates.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
16. When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even if you offer many prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood;
17. wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds
out of my sight!
Stop doing wrong,
18. learn to do right!
Seek justice,

encourage the oppressed.

Defend the cause of the fatherless,
plead the case of the widow.

19. "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 as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

20. If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the best from the land;

21. but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword."
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

I pray that as we start this new year, we will embrace the words of Isaiah and Come and Reason together with God—that His truth will set us free and that His love will heal our hearts, and though we have histories filled with the dark stains of sin, through Jesus, we are washed clean, reborn with new hearts and right spirits, and made pure.

So, Come and Reason together with us in 2021 as we work together to advance God's kingdom of love!
