

BaptistWay Bible Series for April 15: When God has had enough

April 2, 2012

- [Download a powerpoint resource for this lesson here.](#)

This week's lesson begins a five-week study taken from the book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah served in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) and frequently counseled its kings. His ministry began during the reign of King Uzziah and stretched well into the reign of Hezekiah.

He holds first position among the writing prophets and is the only major prophet of the Assyrian crisis. Isaiah witnessed the outpouring of God's judgment as the Assyrians destroyed the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.) and scourged the Southern Kingdom.

Isaiah's opening chapter delves straight into God's great arraignment of Judah. The lesson's title is marvelously descriptive of Isaiah's first communication with Judah. God has had enough of Judah's sinfulness and is ready to negotiate peace. The real question though is whether Judah has suffered enough from her sin to desire peace as well.

The message comes to a climax in the verse 18, where the Lord calls a conference with his people. The Lord seeking a settlement before Judah requested help shows the Lord's sense of mercy. Salvation will be offered as the remedy to Judah's sinful condition. Thus in the opening chapter, Isaiah's magnificent theme—the Lord's salvation—is introduced.

Verses 2-3 complain that Israel does not understand the Lord. The key to understanding the Lord is to know him. This knowing is emphasized here.

God raised his children; they should know him. Domestic animals know their masters, but Israel does not know her God. Thus Israel's trouble flows from her lack of knowing and understanding the Lord.

Verse 4 underscores Israel's condition by referencing sin: sinful, guilt, evildoers, corruption. The cause for this condition is Israel's forsaking, spurning and turning from the Lord. Israel does not merely lack understanding of God, she actively rejects him!

The results of Israel's rejection of the Lord are emphasized in verses 5-6: the thorough affliction of the people, expressed in metaphors of physical wounds. Verses 7-8 describe the wounding in national terms. The image is of constant devastating catastrophes, not a single disaster. Israel is being thoroughly consumed by its sinful condition. Hasn't she had enough?

Verse 9 compares Israel to Sodom and Gomorrah. The two cities were judged and destroyed for their abandonment to sin. Israel is being destroyed for its sin also. Had not the Lord showed mercy, Israel already would have joined Sodom and Gomorrah among the judged.

Verse 10 symbolically renames Israel as Sodom and Gomorrah, addressing her, as it were, as one condemned of complete involvement in sin. Verses 11-15 describe the Lord's distaste for Israel's three basic religious practices—offering sacrifices, observing holy commemorations and praying. Israel tragically is going through the motions. Israel's great involvement in sin has rendered her numerous sacrifices irrelevant. They do not atone her sinful condition. Her involvement in religious assemblies and convocations weary the Lord (v. 14) because Israel's sinfulness renders them meaningless.

Israel's prayers are even worse. Her involvement in sin rendered her atoning sacrifices ineffective, thus her hands became stained with the blood of the sacrifices (v. 15). Such blood was meant to cleanse the

Israelites of their sin-guiltiness, but rote fulfillment of sacrificial regulations was not sufficient. God expects truth in worship (John 4:23). The Israelites were going through religious motions while actively pursuing sin.

The first line of verse 16 sets up the resolution verse 18 offers. Israel's sinfulness left her unclean. The reference to ritual cleansing represents the means to a right standing before the Lord. The question is how a person can make their "hands" clean.

The Lord's answer first delivers a three-fold exhortation to stop sinning in a positive-negative-positive format. Verse 17 delivers four external behaviors, of special importance to God, which point to the validity of one's turning from sin. Verses 16-17 describe repentance in Old Testament style: turn from sinfulness and turn to godliness. Thus godly character, which cannot be sustained by the evil-hearted, represents the essential element of repentance: turning to God.

Verses 18-20 deliver Isaiah's climactic point: the Lord offers salvation to sinners willing to repent. Repentance is seen in turning to the Lord for a decisive encounter (v. 18) and the willingness to obey (v. 19). God's response to repentance, grace, is seen in the offer of atonement (v. 18) and the provision of prosperity in the land.

Verse 18 refers to scarlet and crimson, both names for the color of blood. The reference is to blood-guiltiness, the status of those guilty of sin. Nevertheless, the Lord offers salvation, expressed as removing one's blood-guiltiness. Such cleansing renders the hands of the guilty white as snow or wool. God's salvation completely cleanses one sin and guilt.

The possible responses are described in verses 19-20. Obedience to the Lord (v. 19) leads to cleansing and a right standing with God. These two points are represented by eating the best from the land. Rebellion against the Lord (v. 20), however, leads only to destruction by the sword.

The Lord's offer of salvation comes as a grand promise for those who see the futility of their sinful ways. The Lord has had enough of sin and evil. Therefore, he provides salvation by grace. To those who respond with obedience, he promises cleansing and high quality living. The real question though is who is willing to turn from their sin, accept the Lord's promise, and live obediently.