

Isaiah 1

BACKGROUND

- The probable context of this oracle is the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 (cf. v. 7).

QUESTIONS

1. This is a lawsuit oracle. List the crimes of which Judah is guilty. Read for reference the demands of God and the law in Deut 21:18-21 and Ex 22:21
2. Read Deut 30:19. Why are the heavens and earth called as witnesses in Isa 1:2? Read Isa 65:17; 66:22. How is the fate of the heavens and earth tied to God's plans for his people and the Gentiles? (Does this say anything about our role as stewards, and the current plight of the earth?)
3. This passage shows a typical Isaianic¹ construction: condemnation is never far from consolation and restoration. What hope is offered in Isa 1? (Cheat a little and peek at 2:1-5 as well.)
4. Commentator Raymond C. Orlund writes,²

Paul Tournier, the Swiss psychiatrist, observed, "A diffuse and vague guilt feeling kills the personality, whereas the conviction of sin gives life to it." Isaiah begins with life-giving conviction of sin. It's our first step back to God...

What is conviction of sin? It is not an oppressive spirit of uncertainty or paralyzing guilt feelings. Conviction of sin is the lance of the divine surgeon piercing the infected soul, releasing the pressure.

Weekly we corporately confess our sins. Ideally in this soul-searching the Holy Spirit shows us each our sin. When this doesn't occur, we are left merely with a cloud of guilt which obscures the victorious knowledge of Christ in us.

What is your experience? How often do you search your heart, alert for the guidance of the Holy Spirit? In those times when you don't get a chance to do this often, do you notice any effects?

5. Isaiah 1:9 is quoted by Paul in Romans 9:29 to argue that God's plan at the inception of the first-century Church is to save a remnant out of Israel. As Carson and Beale note,

True to biblical form, the laments of both the apostle and the prophet recall the promise of *salvation in the moment of failure*, contrary to all human expectation. Paul finds in the Scripture the pattern (type) of God's eschatological dealings with his people. [In the first century], despite Israel's unbelief, a remnant has believed in the Messiah—a harbinger of Israel's salvation.³

What do you think of Paul's exegesis? How do you see this "pattern" at work in God's plans today, or in your own life?

6. Arguably, Judah's priorities were deeply flawed: They were focusing on religious observance (not a bad thing in itself) while ignoring the compassion called for in the law (vv. 11-17). What are the priorities in our church, in the CRC, and in the evangelical community as a whole? (What gets us "het up"?)

¹ Isaiash? Isaiahesque? Isaac?

² *Isaiah* (Crossway, Wheaton), 2005, pp. 25-26.

³ C. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (IVP), 2007, p. 650. [Emphasis mine.]